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*The*  
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*The*  
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*of the*  
MOUNTAIN

*An Escape to the Amazon*

BY JAMES RAMSEY ULLMAN

CARRICK & EVANS, INC.

*New York*

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**A**

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TO RUTH

*whom I missed*

*and*

*who, I hope, missed me*



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## INTRODUCTION

by BROOKS ATKINSON

ALTHOUGH I am one of the drama critics who drove Mr. Ullman out of the producing business, he permits me to write an introduction to his book of escape. I am not clear in my mind about his logic. Is permission a malign form of revenge? Not to me, at any rate. For his book is the chronicle of a voyage to Peru and of a headlong trek by automobile, mule and river steamer across the Andes and down the Amazon, and after reading it I am persuaded that the drama critics did him a good turn. If the "night watch constables" had not sharply wrapped their night sticks on four of his productions in succession, he might have gone on for years imagining that all the world's a stage with Broadway at the heart of it. Purely as business shrewdness it might be more logical for the producers to send critics on long journeys to the mountains, jungles and rivers; but until that piece of logic occurs to them I am content to write introductions to books about places and people I have never seen.

As a matter of fact, I am in a fine position to appreciate escape and to promote it with sincerity. The Hudson River lies only a quarter of a mile from the windows of my writing-room; and although I cannot see as far south as the Upper Bay, where the Statue of Liberty patiently stands, I can see enough of the Hudson to frame the *Normandie* and *Queen Mary* as they steam up and down the stream. If Mr. Ullman had looked up at my window when he headed south in the *Santa Rita*, he would have seen me waving and wishing him well. Since he did not look up I was compelled to turn back to my desk and go to work on the producers he had left in town.

Some of them were in luck that season. Some of them produced plays that the public thoroughly enjoyed. Indeed, some of them produced plays that the critics liked, which shows how

friendly the theater business can be. While Mr. Ullman was battering around in the jungle and making friends with at least one fabulous American, we were wriggling through Times Square at night, breathing the carbon dioxide of fashionable opening performances and going to bed at about the time he was getting up to greet the sunrise. We were shivering in the cold draughts of New York streets while he was steaming in the jungle. Although he was nursing a broken heart, I fancy he knew that he was having the best of it, and probably he has written this book to torture those of us who had to stay at home.

The journey got into his blood stream in more ways than one. I know that, for last summer an inquiring newspaperman remarked to me: "Do you know a producer named Ullman who is just starting off with an expedition to Borneo?" I was a little annoyed by this. There is no sound reason why Mr. Ullman should get two journeys on four sets of bad notices, particularly to an island I almost visited once but missed because a cargo of sulphur went to a rival ship at the last moment. My office staff, which has a fine sense of moral justice, instantly tracked Mr. Ullman down, although he thought he was in hiding, and made absolutely sure that he was not going away just then. Having been infected once, however, he will be burning with travel fever again some day. If he will only look up at my window when his ship steams down the river I will—a little enviously perhaps—give him the mariner's farewell.

.

## AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I should like to express my debt of gratitude to my traveling companion, HERMAN LORD, and to NATHANIEL WHITTEN, of Tarma, Peru, for the contributions their cameras have made to this book. The frontispiece is Mr. WHITTEN's, and approximately half of the other photographs are Mr. LORD's.

J. R. U.



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# GENESIS

## (POSIES FROM THE PRESS)

The intentions of "The Laughing Woman" are laudable, but the results are lamentable.

—BROOKS ATKINSON, *Times*.

"Stork Mad," Mr. Ullman's new offering at the Ambassador, is horribly, depressingly dull.

—WILLELA WALDORF, *Post*.

"So Proudly We Hail" doesn't amount to a hoot in Joe Leblang's bargain basement.

—JOHN ANDERSON, *Journal*.

"The Laughing Woman" has the dramatic content of a hole in a doughnut.

—JOHN MASON BROWN, *Post*.

After producing "Stork Mad" Mr. Ullman should face his mirror this morning flushed and ashamed.

—BURNS MANTLE, *News*.

Last night, after a long wait, we saw "The Laughing Woman," and I for one am sorry that I did.

—GILBERT GABRIEL, *American*.

"Double Dummy" is imitative and second-rate.

—BROOKS ATKINSON, *Times*.

"Double Dummy" suffers from ineptness. Those of us who were duty-bound to sit it out also suffered.

—JOHN MASON BROWN, *Post*.

## WALTER WINCHELL

### *On Broadway*

—James R. Ullman, the theatrical producer, is leaving for the Amazon jungles next week.



# I

## MATTO GROSSO IN MANHATTAN

IT HAD all happened with such incredible suddenness.

At the beginning of October I had been a New York theatrical producer with four plays in preparation for Broadway. At the end of November I was a former theatrical producer with four sets of scenery in Cain's Warehouse.

"What next?" inquired Ruth one morning over the coffee cups.

"Well, there's always Fuller Brushes," I said. "Or sheep-raising in Wyoming. Or maybe Roosevelt will appoint me to the Supreme Court."

Ruth contemplated me with wifely concern. How different, she must have been thinking, things had been before the Great Extermination.

"I know what we'll do," she declared suddenly. "We'll take a trip. That's just what you need. You're worn out, and a nice trip will give you a chance to think things over and get away from—from—"

"*It all*," I suggested.

"Yes, it's just the thing. Now where shall we go? How about Virginia Beach?"

"Wrong season."

"Bermuda, then?"

Far down inside of me, in the dark remoteness of the inner man where the Atkinsons, Andersons and Browns of the world can never penetrate, something quietly, gently stirred—something that was still unbruised, unbloodied and unbowed.

"Bermuda?" I repeated. "Mmmmm—"

In the library we pulled out the atlas and contemplated the pin-points that were the Summer Isles.

"Of course we've been there—" Ruth was saying.

My eye had traveled down the pale blue inches of the Atlantic.

"There's Cuba," I ventured, "and the West Indies."

Ruth seemed interested, and we threaded our way among the islands—Puerto Rico, Haiti, Jamaica, Antigua, Saint Kitts, Martinique—

"Some of the cruise-ships," I heard myself saying, "go as far as South America."

Ruth looked up suddenly.

"South America!" she exclaimed. "But I was thinking of just one week."

"We could make it two," I muttered, my eyes on the map. Yes, there was Venezuela, green and beckoning at the bottom of the page. And nestling beside it, pink Colombia.

"Do you remember that chap we met last week?" I asked. "The one who had been in Peru."

"Uh-huh," said Ruth. It was a very restrained uh-huh indeed.

"He told me it was the most fascinating country he had ever visited. The Andes, the deserts, the dead cities of the Incas—Did you know that practically all of civilized Peru lies in a little strip between the Andes and the Pacific? On the other side of the mountain there's nothing; just jungle wilderness, the same as before white men came."

I had been turning the pages of the atlas.

"Look—there's eastern Peru. See how blank it is; only the rivers and Iquitos. There it is—Iquitos. The only city in two thousand miles of jungle. It's on the Amazon—"

"Had you thought of a rocket to Mars?" Ruth inquired sweetly.

"Eh?"

"I said Mars. We might go there, mightn't we?"

I shook my head.

"They say there's life on Mars; maybe civilized beings. There'd be critics—"

That was how it began.

For a few days Ruth clung with forlorn hope to her modest vision of Virginia Beach, but it was no use. The bacilli of wanderlust were in my blood stream—where she herself, innocently enough, had planted them—and they were there to stay, multiplying, rampaging, virulent. If I was going to get away from *it all*, I damn well was going to get so far away that *it all*, with all its horses and all its men, could not get me back into its toils until I was good and ready to come. In my outward life I was still busy consoling investors and pacifying creditors, but in my mind's eye I was already stalking along white tropic beaches, clinging to Andean crags, threading dark jungle rivers. Broadway was remote. From my perch atop a coconut palm I could spit right in its eye.

At last Ruth capitulated. If the Andes and the Amazon, heat, mosquitoes, anacondas and tarantulas were what I needed to refresh my critic-scarred soul, she would not, she said, stand in my way. But she did not feel it necessary that both members of the family should go out of their minds simultaneously. Striking a rational compromise, she would accompany me to Peru, spend a short time with me in Lima, and return to New York when I struck out for parts uncouth. The implied, though not openly stated, thought was that I would in due time see the error of my ways and return with her. As insurance, however, she had persuaded her sister to come along with us. Edna, she pointed out, would be company for her on the trip back if I *did* stick by my plan and would be useful to help lace me into my straitjacket when need arose.

You don't just decide to go to South America—and go. Not by a damn sight.

I have often contemplated with awe and envy the superlative ease with which certain travelers—or at least certain writers of travel-stories—are able to roam the earth with untrammelled freedom and an utter disregard of such trivia as passports, visas,

express-checks, tickets, clothing and toothbrushes. "Come with me to Tibet," chirrup the peripatetic scribe, and forthwith skips nonchalantly over that nation's rigidly closed frontier. "With five kopeks in my pocket I hitch-hiked from Moscow to Singapore," chronicles the debonair adventurer, as if tying his shoe-laces were all the preparation needed for such a jaunt. Alas, it was not my lot to inhabit such a footloose, happy-go-lucky world. Every ocean I would cross was guarded by implacable steamship agents; every strange land I would visit was hemmed in by platoons of customs officials; on every mountain crag and jungle trail lurked a prefect or a vice-consul waiting to give me the works. Long before I first set foot on South America—yes, long before I got as far as Sandy Hook—I was already a trained and hardened veteran in the jungle of international officialdom.

First, of course, there was the passport—a comparatively easy acquisition. When it came to visas, however, things perked up, the Peruvian and Brazilian consulates letting it be known that they could issue them only after submission by the applicant of health and character certificates, plus a half-dozen photographs apiece. The photograph part of it was painless—until I had to look at them. The Quest for Character consisted of being finger-printed by the police department and receiving a grudging written admission that I had never been in jail for a major offense.

It was in the Search for Health that the going grew really rough. My physician was delighted when I told him where I was going; it would give him a reason to read up on tropical diseases, which he had theretofore had little occasion to study. His thoroughness was appalling, and on my next visit he greeted me with an array of shining syringes and enough vaccines, capsules and antitoxins to convey an army healthfully through the Black Death. He had also prepared for me a list of the infectious diseases to which I might be exposed, including malaria, amoebic and bacillary dysentery, yellow fever, typhoid fever, undulant fever, leprosy, hookworm, cholera, bubonic plague and the common cold, and appended an outline of the symptoms and treatment for each. The only difficulties seemed to be (1) that the

course of most of the diseases was such that you couldn't tell which was which until rigor mortis had set in and (2) that there wasn't any effective treatment for most of them anyhow. Thus reassured, I submitted to a vaccination and some twelve assorted inoculations and couldn't lift my arms for a week.

Finally, provided with my doctor's certificate, I returned to the consulates, only to learn that before acceptance it would have to be approved by the Board of Health of the city. As soon as possible, therefore, I went to the new Department of Health Building on Center Street. What befell me there I shall set down briefly and without comment, and anyone may make of it what he chooses.

Entering the central lobby I espied a sign over a nearby door reading CERTIFICATES ISSUED HERE. This looked promising, but almost immediately stopped looking promising as I continued reading and saw CHARGE, ONE DOLLAR. It was Monday morning, and on Monday mornings I am invariably not only penniless but in debt. I had fifty cents in my pocket, and my bank was four miles uptown. Eight miles later I reappeared at CERTIFICATES ISSUED HERE, stood in line for fifteen minutes, and was then informed by a clerk that these were *birth* certificates, not *health* certificates. Health certificates were issued somewhere else in the building (he did not know where) and they didn't cost anything.

The man in the information booth outside went him one better. Not only didn't he know where health certificates were issued, but he had never heard of health certificates, was certain there were no such things as health certificates, and assured me that even if there were health certificates the Department of Health would not be the place that issued them. A man in a chauffeur's uniform, who had been standing by, came up.

"I know what you mean, buddy," he said. "You mean a health certificate."

I agreed that that was what I meant, and he promptly escorted me through a complicated series of doors and corridors until we arrived at what was apparently a surgical dispensary. At least

there were many nurses and many unhappy-looking people with bandages.

"Miss O'Brien here will take care of you," he said, and left me in charge of the head nurse. Miss O'Brien was efficient-looking and had heard of health certificates.

"I'll be with you in just a minute," she said, and returned in a half-hour. By that time she had forgotten what I came for, but when I reminded her she said, oh, yes, Dr. Goldy was my man. Dr. Goldy's office was somewhere in the building, but she wasn't sure where.

"Just ask for health certificates at the information desk," she suggested.

There *was* a Dr. Goldy and he had an office in the building, and finally I found him. He too had heard of health certificates, but had nothing whatever to do with them. He suggested I try the commissioner's office on the eighth floor.

By this time, apparently, the elevator operators in the building had grown tired of carrying me up and down, for five minutes of ringing for a car elicited no response. A stiff climb and a two-mile walk brought me to a door marked COMMISSIONERS, but subsequent inquiries of the young lady inside disclosed that this was the deputy-commissioners' office and that what I wanted was *the* commissioner's office on the fourth floor. After a while I arrived at *the* commissioner's office, where, to my amazement, a young man assured me that, yes, he issued the certificates, but that first I would have to have my own physician's certificate certified [*sic*] at the Bureau of Permits on the ground floor. When this had been done I could return to him.

The Bureau of Permits turned out to be my old friend CERTIFICATES ISSUED HERE: CHARGE, ONE DOLLAR, and the queues at the windows were longer than ever. I selected a comparatively short one, stood in line for about ten minutes and was rewarded with the information that I should go to Window No. 14, over in the corner. Window No. 14 had a sign above it. The sign read: BURIAL PERMITS. By this time I didn't greatly care whether I went to South America or Woodlawn, and as there was no line at

BURIAL PERMITS I had nothing to lose. I showed the clerk my doctor's letter.

"There must be some mistake," I said, "but I was told—"

The clerk took the letter, stamped it and handed it back to me without a word. My certificate had been certified.

I have a dim recollection of stumbling back to *the* commissioner's office and of the young man there doing some rapid stamping and signing. Five minutes later the sane and soothing roar of the subway was in my ears, my health certificate was in my pocket, and a serene self-confidence was in my heart. The Amazonian jungles would be a pushover after this.

None of my subsequent skirmishes with officialdom had the epic quality of the Quest for Health, but some of them contained the elements of drama and fantasy. The purchase of steamship accommodations was complicated by the unshakable conviction of all travel agents that what every traveler really wants, all his protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, is a cruise de luxe, complete with tiled swimming pool, M.G.M. Feature Presentations and a master of ceremonies. I wanted a one-way passage to Callao, Peru, on a cargo ship or small passenger vessel. It was only by keeping wide awake and on guard that I did not sign up for a Mediterranean trip on the *Rex*, Coronation Week in London or a ten-thousand-dollar, round-the-world cruise on the *Empress of Britain*. Finally—though with stern disapproval—I was permitted to engage passage on the Grace Liner *Santa Rita*, which was small enough to resemble a ship rather than Rockefeller Center and was going where I wanted to go.

As instructed, I sent my passport, together with my collection of certificates, to the consuls for visa. In due time it came back, accompanied by many stamped and ribboned subsidiary documents. I shall quote from only one of them—my *Folha de Identificação para Pedido de Visto em Passaporte Estrangeiro en Brasil*:

Name: James Ramsey Ullman.

Profession: Writer.

Can you Read and Write: No.

Married or Single: Single.

Number of Children: Two.

Vessel on which Sailing: *Chimu*.

One way or round-trip ticket: Round trip (it was one way).

Port of entry into Brazil: Rio de Janeiro (it was to be the Amazon village of Tabatinga).

You get the general idea.

The only item that disturbed me at all was that referring to port of entry. I called up the Brazilian Consulate and asked if there might not be difficulties because of it. They said they didn't think so. I indicated that I'd appreciate it if they could be a little more certain, as I had no desire to arrive at Tabatinga and be told to go around to the front door at Rio, a distance of a mere eight thousand miles through the Panama Canal or the Straits of Magellan. They said there would probably be no trouble. I hoped they were probably right.

Between bouts with the Established Powers I devoted myself to another stern duty of all prospective travelers—Reading Up. In no time, it seemed, I had amassed a vast and heterogeneous library, ranging from Prescott's stately "Conquest of Peru" to Peter Fleming's breezy "Brazilian Adventure," and from Darwin's "Voyage of the *Beagle*" to the monthly journal of the Pará Chamber of Commerce. Virtually all the travel books—of which there were hundreds—began with the flat statement that the interior of the South American continent is utterly unknown and forthwith proceeded to describe it in minute detail. This would have been discouraging to the adventure-minded traveler had it not been for the fact that the data and impressions in one book differed so widely from those in another. The greatest discrepancies occurred between the stories of the "adventure" type and those of the commercial-promotion or "good-will" type. The authors of the former were always in the direst straits; they subsisted on coca leaves and fried scorpions, were hopelessly lost in the jungle whenever they strayed a hundred yards from camp, and walked constantly with death at their elbow

and a poisoned arrow in the seat of their pants. The "good-will" authors, on the other hand, encountered none of these perils, though they traveled through the identical terrain as their adventuresome competitors. For them there were swift, modern ships plying upon even the smallest Amazonian tributaries; whenever they tired, while journeying overland, there was always a delightful *tambo*, or native inn, just around the turn in the trail; and even the humblest rubber-station was a paradise of passion fruit and Kelvinators. The divergence was confusing, but it was also encouraging. At least it indicated that my record, when I got to it, would be as authoritative as the next.

The one branch of Reading Up on which I should have been laboring, but of course wasn't, was the study of Spanish and Portuguese. It was, I fully realized, both impractical and impolite to travel in a foreign country without having at least a rudimentary knowledge of the native language, and each day I promised myself that on the next I would get to work and advance myself beyond the *buenos noches*, *muchas gracias* stage in which I was currently floundering. As a matter of fact, I could not even say that much in Portuguese. My only hope, it seemed, was to head immediately for a region where the inhabitants spoke only Quichua or Araucanian, for they at least could not blame me for not having taken a Berlitz course.

More or less related to Reading Up, in the earnest business of preparation for travel, are Contacts. Contacts consist principally of dozens of letters of introduction from people you know slightly to people you don't know at all, probably don't want to know, and who certainly don't want to know you. In my particular case the situation was somewhat complicated by the fact that I had only the foggiest notion of where I was going, but that did not deter me from collecting a briefcase-full of introductory notes to practically everybody anybody knew south of Philadelphia. During the entire trip I made use of two.

Another unavoidable phenomenon in the realm of Contacts is The-Man-Who-Has-Been-There. Let it become known that you are going on a journey—be it to Iquitos, Irkutsk or Antarctica—

and all your friends will immediately produce acquaintances who "know the region intimately" and "will be able to give invaluable information." Most of the authorities to whom I was thus referred turned out to be movie actors who had once passed through the Panama Canal on their way to Hollywood or elderly ladies who had had a day in Caracas during a Caribbean cruise. And the few persons I met who had actually been in the interior of tropical South America were of little more assistance. Inasmuch as January and February were the rainy season, said one, I must be sure to be equipped with boots and poncho. Inasmuch as January and February were the dry season, said another, I must be sure to carry along my own drinking water. And so on. All agreed, however, that I would be devoured by insects, bitten by snakes, racked by fever and drowned in the rapids, and assured me that if such minor inconveniences didn't bother me I would have a perfectly marvelous time.<sup>1</sup>

It was the night before sailing. I crammed the last pair of underdrawers into the bulging suit case, clicked the lock and stood up.

"Well," said I, "we're set."

It was not, I confess, a moment at which I could justifiably be very proud of myself. My business had just collapsed, and as a result I was going to South America. Not to start a new business—just going. Instead of rolling up my sleeves and applying myself to the job of building success out of failure, I was clearing out of the scene of the accident and blandly going on a journey

<sup>1</sup> There were, to be sure, a few bright exceptions, and I should like to express my thanks to Dr. R. C. Oliveira of the Brazilian Information Bureau, Dr. Frank Tannenbaum of Columbia University, Mr. Raye Platt of the American Geographical Society, Mr. George O'Rourke of Thomas Cook & Son, and Dr. Robert E. Kaufman, all of whom gave me valuable information and suggestions relative to various aspects of my trip.

The maps of the American Geographical Society, incidentally, can be of great assistance to anyone planning a journey into the lesser known parts of South America. They are on the scale of one to a million and possess far more detail than the ordinary South American maps on the market. Some of them have been printed, but for much of the interior of the continent they are not yet complete, and only photostatic copies of the originals can be secured.

which had not the remotest connection with my life as it had been or as it would be when I returned.

Even the journey itself was vague in the extreme. It had only a beginning; no middle and no end. Ruth, her sister Edna and I were leaving for Peru; they with round-trip tickets, I with a one-way ticket—and that was all. After they left, the prospectus was exclusively negative. My trip, wherever it might take me, would have no plan and no purpose; it would contribute nothing toward scientific knowledge or the wealth of nations; it would not, in all probability, result in the discovery of a gold mine, Colonel Fawcett, or a Way of Life. No one was sending me on it; no one had any direct interest in where I would go or what I would do; and no one was concerned with what I might acquire from it. This, of course, excepted Ruth, whose wifely intuition told her I would acquire both malaria and a beard.

No, there was no use pretending. This journey of mine was a running away. From failure; from work; from the problems and responsibilities that hemmed me in. Why, then, South America? Why the Andes and the Amazon rather than Virginia Beach or Bermuda or the bars of West Fifty-second Street? Partly, I suppose, because I would be rather less likely to encounter well-meaning friends who "knew me when" and would tell me just what *they* thought was wrong with "Stork Mad." Partly because I had always found the ocean, the mountains and long miles of forest to be a better therapeutic for the ills of the spirit than 3-Star Hennessy or the lobbies of hotels. But chiefly, I think, I was going to South America for the childishly simple reason that it was remote and unknown to me and many horizons beyond my horizon. There were a hundred good reasons why I should not go, and practically none why I should, but I was still young enough to believe that a good journey, like a good marriage, should be an affair of the heart rather than of the mind.

And just what was it that South America offered the heart? Well, there were many places I wanted to visit, many men and things I wanted to see and know. The dark-breasted Pacific, the blinding beaches, the desolation of high peaks. The caves by the

Urubamba where dead Incas sit through the centuries with their arms crossed on their chests; the hills north of Cuzco where the eye cannot tell what is the work of man and what the work of geologic time. The long, green tunnel of the Pichis Trail; the straggling remnants of European colonists who came to find empire and took to themselves brown wives and coca leaves; the shy Chuncho Indians who, they say, are hospitable to the gringo but keep their arrows sharp. The jungle, dark and trackless as the brain of man. And the great Amazon, rising in Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, pouring down in a thousand streams from mountains above the Pacific, clawing out the soil of a continent with a thousand silver nails and depositing it three thousand miles away on the floor of the Atlantic—the blood stream and the intestine of three million square miles of living earth which man has scarcely touched.

However superficially, I should come to know a little of these things. However impermanently, I should move for a little while through a world of new sights and sounds, new men and things, new values. That my mildly lunatic little venture would help solve any of my practical problems I had not the faintest expectation. I was embarking on it not for any result which it might bring, but for its own sake. Many journeys have been made in the world by many men, and each traveler has his own ostensible purposes and ends. But whether he go by ship, by train, by horse, by dirigible or afoot, whether on the *Normandie* with ten thousand in express checks or by the roadside with a toothbrush and a hopeful thumb, he goes, though he may not know it, for the same reason as his fellows. He is escaping, and he is seeking. Beyond the horizon there is always hope. On the other side of the mountain is El Dorado.

During the sixteenth century the story was sometimes told in the courts and along the water fronts of Europe that far up the reaches of the Amazon River, in newly discovered South America, there lived an Indian tribe whose city was called Manoa and was built of gold. The chief of the tribe, the story related, was each morning dusted with gold by his attendants until he shone

all yellow in the sun. Thus gilded he moved about all day, and in the evening the gold was washed from him into the river, so that, having touched his sacred person, it could never be used again. There were sailors and adventurers who claimed to have seen these specks of gold swirling in the waters of the great river, near its mouth, but none of them knew the location of the storied city in the inner darkness of the continent. The years passed, and still no man had found it.

Then, in 1595, Sir Walter Raleigh, undaunted by the failure of so many men before him, crossed the Atlantic to the wilderness of the New World "in quest of the Golden City of Manoa and the Golden King, who by the Spaniards is called El Dorado." He didn't find them. But if this was a good enough reason for Sir Walter Raleigh to go to South America it was good enough for me.

.

## II

### DOWN TWO OCEANS

*No tengo dinero, no tengo papel,  
No tengo trabajo—carramba! Oh, hell!  
No tengo empleo—oh, what shall I do?  
Carramba! Carrajo! Me voy al Peru!  
—From a West Coast ditty*

I WAS glad it was raining. As we bumped down to the pier in the cab the streets were dreary and dank with water that was trying to turn to snow but couldn't. Times Square, as we passed through it, looked frowsy and disheveled, its sidewalks almost empty, its thousand electric pin-points winking feebly through the gloom. A theater marquee slid by.—OPENING TONIGHT—Alas, poor impresario. His hand-picked audience would arrive at the end of the first act, and the critics would have wet feet. Gray December was in the city's bones. It was a good day to be leaving it, to be escaping. I had, of course, but the faintest notion of what I was escaping *to*, but one look at what I was escaping *from* was enough to reassure me. Somewhere in the world the sun was shining hot and golden in the zenith; somewhere there were white beaches, tall mountains and long green trails through the jungle; somewhere there were men and women who didn't know the difference between a Broadway producer and a man from Mars. And I was going there—

The Grace Line pier was a cavern of dampness and smells, but our two-by-four cabin on the *Santa Rita* was snug and bright. We spent a leisurely hour unpacking, saying good-by to such of our hardy friends as braved the elements to see us off, and wondering what our berths would look like when the hardy friends with their highballs finally got off them. Edna appeared

from her cabin down the corridor with a worried expression and the dreadful premonition that her roommate might snore. Ruth and I, preoccupied with our own problems, flipped coins for choice of berths. Ruth won and picked the berth nearest the porthole—a choice she was to have ample time to regret.

Presently the ship's siren was howling, the last visitors had stumbled down the gangway, and the pier was slowly receding into the water-front mist. Down the river there was no skyline, no green of Battery Park, no Statue of Liberty—only gray shapes and the gray rain falling slantwise on the water. Soon the inevitable convoy of gulls picked us up and screamed us impatiently on our way. Beyond the Narrows we could see no land at all, but after an hour a sudden accentuation of the ship's motion made us surmise that we were in the open ocean. Descending to our cabin the surmise was confirmed. The Atlantic had bade us welcome by depositing a small section of itself in the middle of Ruth's berth.

On the morning of the first day out the weather was still grim, but no grimmer than the faces of the passengers. About a third of them, apparently, were seasick. Another third—the philosophers and fatalists—were not actually ill, but had decided they were *going* to be and were conducting themselves accordingly. The remainder, though neither sick nor preparing to be sick, were engaged in the morose occupation of sizing up their fellow-travelers and as a result appeared even more depressed than the other two-thirds. As a member of the third group I made my rounds of the promenade deck, punctiliously observing the ritual of shipboard etiquette which requires all passengers, for their first few hours on board, to stare at each other with either (a) icy indifference or (b) undisguised loathing.

As I walked I kept passing a young woman who was circling the deck in the opposite direction. The first five times we observed the strictest decorum by ignoring each other completely. The sixth time we both permitted ourselves a disapproving stare. The seventh and eighth we set our jaws and registered

disdain, and on the ninth we eyed each other with wholehearted ferocity. Coming around for the tenth time I was nervous; at the next encounter there would be nothing for it but to punch her nose. But as we came toward each other again I had an inspiration.

"Hello," I said.

"Hello," she replied, and smiled.

For a moment I was stuck. Things began to look black again. Then:

"Gulls," I said, pointing at the gulls.

"Yes," she said, and from there on it was easy.

In due time she turned out to be Miss Sara Forbes, daughter of the British minister to Peru, currently on her way from the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, where she had been studying nursing, to rejoin her family in Lima. By mid-afternoon we were thoroughly acquainted with each other's life history, family, friends, philosophy and shuffleboard games. When the ice breaks on ship-board you go through with a crash.

During the day others, too, of the *Rita's* passengers emerged from behind their hostile anonymity and turned into recognizable individuals. There was Mr. Hicks, a British-American, who was traveling to Chile for a London export house; and Mr. Marden, from Terre Haute, who was on his way to the Canal Zone to supervise the building of a road; and Professor Jones, on sabbatical leave from Miami University in Ohio, en route to Valparaiso and an exchange fellowship; and Mr. Cunningham, of the Canadian Department of Agriculture, who was on an obscure horticultural junket to the Argentine; and Mr. Capps, who was the proprietor of an alligator farm in Costa Rica; and the Fernandinis, a Peruvian family of husband, wife, daughter, nurse and dog, homeward bound after a New York vacation; and engineers, and more engineers; and salesmen, and more salesmen— Indeed, practically all our fellow-travelers began to exhibit human characteristics after the first day's miasma of seasickness and suspicion had been dispelled.

We turned in that night with our blankets covering us and awoke the next morning with them on the floor—which meant we were in the Gulf Stream. It was no longer raining, but sea and sky were an almost indistinguishable gray, and we were very much alone between them.

There was nothing of the Ocean Greyhound or Queen of the Atlantic about the *Santa Rita*. She was geared for the marathon, not the sprints. Her deep furrow in the ocean was cut with patient deliberation, and the vibration of her body as she moved was not that of straining exertion, but of measured plodding. In a train, a plane or an automobile this would have been unpleasant—almost reprehensible. They are machines which are built to move swiftly, and if they move slowly, they are belying their only function. But it is different, I think, with a ship. The *Rita's* mileage—like her bar, her bathtubs and her passenger-list—may not have borne comparison with those of the great transatlantic liners, but she was not their inferior for that. Indeed, in our slow and casual progress down the curving meridian of our course, it seemed to me we made a showing of the sound sea virtues of steadfastness and determination that none of the hotel-ferries, shuttling back and forth between Cherbourg and New York, could hope to match. The *Santa Rita* had business on the west coast of South America and she would get there in her own good time, with a sublime disregard of the number of movie stars at the captain's table and the split second at which she passed Ambrose Light.

Except on the occasion of the captain's dinner or a shipwreck the cargo of a vessel is of considerably more importance than the passenger-list. It pays more, it costs less to transport, and it never complains or gets seasick. Our cargo on the *Rita* consisted chiefly of trucks, rails and mining machinery consigned to big American and British corporations in Chile and Peru. Among this welter of hardware, however, there was one alien item that had a wistful history of its own. It seems that some three months previously there had been an exhibition of products and produce of Chile at the Chilean Consulate in New York. For the occasion

the consul imported many articles from his native country, but the particular pride of his heart was a rare blossom-bearing plant, indigenous only to Chile and little known elsewhere, which he brought up by ship at considerable trouble and expense. It finally reached New York, only to run afoul of the Department of Agriculture, whose inspectors suspected it of harboring questionable parasites and refused to allow it in. The consul appealed to the Port Authority, then to the New York office of the Department of Agriculture, then to the Department at Washington. From this eminent authority he finally received instructions that not only could he not bring the plant into the country to exhibit, but that, according to the law, it could not even be destroyed here. It must be returned forthwith to Chile. By the time this dictum transpired the exhibition, of course, was over, and the plant itself had withered to a dry stalk. But stalk or no, the Department of Agriculture would have none of it, and there it was on the *Santa Rita*, Valparaiso-bound. I inquired of a few ship's officers why they didn't just heave it overboard. They were a bit vague on the point, but seemed to fear it might precipitate some international crisis.

On the fourth morning out the sea had turned from green to blue; the officers appeared in white, and the sun in splendor. Long clouds trailed southward, flat-bottomed and doming toward the zenith, and the warm wind of the Caribbees came rolling down the decks. At noon we raised San Salvador, first of the Americas sighted by Columbus, and that night a lighthouse beacon was blinking at us a few miles to the east; in the early morning we would be rounding the easternmost tip of Cuba. We were out of the open Atlantic, among the islands. The air was softer, the stars were nearer and the broad belly of the sea was shot with phosphorescent gleams. We were furrowing into the tropics and they were showing us their loveliest face. I suspected they would show me the other side too before I was through with them, and they with me.

How reasonless and arbitrary are most of our rules of social conduct! In a New York apartment house families live cheek-by-jowl for years without so much as nodding to each other in the elevator, and a neighbor who makes friendly overtures is at once suspected of being either an eccentric or a confidence man. On shipboard, however, this is exactly reversed. A person who within forty-eight hours of embarking does not know the vocation, income, life-history and personal philosophy of every fellow-passenger is rare indeed, and the hardy non-conformer who fails to call anyone by his Christian name after the first "how do you do" is forthwith branded a snob and a misanthrope. We already knew more about Miss Forbes and Hicks and Jones than people whom we had known in New York for years. The Fernandinis had invited us to dine with them in Lima and visit their mining properties in the nearby Andes. Marden had related to Ruth in full detail the events leading up to his divorce from his first wife, and I am quite certain that had it not been for my unfortunate presence he would long since have asked her to become his second.

At first it seemed that we were the only "tourists" aboard; that is, the only passengers with no specific and fairly rational objective to our voyage. In due time, however, our group was augmented by Mr. Capps—he of the Costa Rican alligator farm. There had, it seems, been some mistake about Mr. Capps. In the first place, his name was not Capps, but Kaplan. In the second place, he was the proprietor, not of an alligator farm, but of a laundry. And in the third place, the laundry was not in Costa Rica, but on De Kalb Avenue, Brooklyn. He was, he assured us, "just going south to look around." In an unguarded moment, apparently, he had expressed to a fellow-passenger the hope that he "might see an alligator," and the shipboard grapevine had taken care of the rest.

To compensate for the loss of Mr. Capps, however, we had made the acquaintance of a traveler whose vocation was, to say the least, exotic. He was a deaf-mute Panamanian, and his life's work, according to his own penciled story, was "trying to get

into the United States." Eight times in the past ten years he had set out for the Land of the Free, and eight times he had been held up by the immigration authorities in New York and deported as an afflicted, and therefore undesirable, alien. This was one of his deportation trips, but, far from being discouraged, he was already making plans for the return voyage and his ninth assault. He was confident that sooner or later he would wear down *somebody's* resistance.

Our acquaintance with the fictitious Mr. Capps had begun romantically and ended in anticlimax. Our acquaintance with another fellow-traveler began as farce-comedy and ended as something else. He was a German doctor, whose misfortune it was to weight two hundred and fifty pounds, to speak English with a comic-strip accent and, in the heat of midday, to resemble less a conventional human being than a steaming pudding just removed from the oven. Our introduction to him had been in the *Rita's* tiny swimming tank, in which his sudden immersion had resulted in half the water, plus Edna, being washed over the side onto the deck; and thenceforward his title as ship's clown was undisputed. It was not until the night before reaching Panama that he existed for us as anything but a ponderously amusing phenomenon.

That night, finding ourselves in adjoining deck-chairs, I inquired of him where he was going. He said to Nicaragua.

"On a pleasure trip?" I asked.

He shook his head.

"No, not a pleasure trip. You see," he continued in his strangled English, "I am a Jew, and four years ago it is necessary for me to leave Germany if I want to continue practicing my profession. I go to London, but I know so few people there I cannot get a foothold. Then I try New York. Ach, New York! It is—how you say?—lousy with exiled German-Jewish doctors. There was no chance. Now I hear there is a shortage of physicians in Nicaragua. Maybe I can make a living there." He paused and shrugged. "Anyhow I try."

When we bade him good-by the next day at Cristobal he was

still sweating and steaming, and his English was more strangled than ever. But he was no longer the fat man from the comic-strips.

The great majority of the *Rita's* passengers were southward bound on the regular routine of their work. Many were going to the Canal Zone, either as government employees or as representatives of business concerns with interests there. The rest—bound for Lima, Arica, Antofagasta, Chavarral, Valparaiso—were engineers, geologists, salesmen, clerks, most of whom were in the employ of big corporations and were returning to their jobs in South America after vacations at home. Even those with roving assignments were, without exception, traversing a route long familiar to them in the course of their work.

These were men whose lives, by ordinary standards, are considered "interesting." Their jobs took them to the distant places of the earth, and they spoke as casually and familiarly of Bogotá and "Valpo," Guayaquil and Cerro de Pasco, as if they were discussing Albany, Pittsburgh and Cincinnati. Hicks had left London ten days before and had spent two days in New York before boarding the *Santa Rita*. He was going to Valparaiso, where he would spend six weeks; then back to New York; then London. An interesting trip? He didn't think so. He was making it for the fifth time in five years. Then there was the representative of an American machinery manufacturing concern who was going to Bogotá for the twentieth time. And the Grace Line accountant who was making his twelfth round-trip to check over the books of the company's South American offices. And many others like them. All had one major interest: to attend to their business and return home as quickly as possible.

The man who travels for a living often finds his life as monotonous and routinized as the man who catches the 8:15 from New Rochelle. His "interesting" work carries him to distant places, but those places, visited and revisited on schedule, soon lose the magic of their strange names and their remoteness. All too quickly Managua becomes identified as a sales-resistance market, Pernambuco as the city with the half-witted buying agent,

Buenaventura as the place where the hotel served rancid butter. While the 8:15 suburbanite sits at home in the evening reading with yearning in his heart of far-off lands, tropical seas, strange capitals, ports and islands, the traveler, as likely as not, is pacing the floor of his hotel room in Rio or Recife, thinking wistfully of the Bronx Express, the green hills of Westchester in April, and the double-feature bills at the neighborhood bingo palace. Hicks liked ice-skating, New York night clubs and a girl in West Orange. He did *not* like sea voyages, hot weather or Valparaiso. What the Bogotá commuter thought of Bogotá could be printed only in a privately circulated edition. Señor Fernandini, though a loyal son of Peru, confided that he somehow acquired a sounder appreciation of his fatherland's virtues when comfortably ensconced in his suite in New York's Biltmore or London's Savoy. Why I should wish to visit Lima—much less Iquitos and the Amazon—was a problem that he could answer only with a baffled shake of the head.

However many kinds of men there were aboard the *Santa Rita*, however divergent our origins, aims and destinies, there was one tie which bound us all together—the desire to have what we hadn't.

The *Rita* averaged just over three hundred miles a day—about half the speed of the big transatlantic ships. On the fifth morning we threaded the strait that separates Cuba and Haiti. Both islands were visible simultaneously—faint lavender outlines on the horizon, scarcely distinguishable from the clouds that piled high above them. Later in the day we steamed by the lighthouse on Navasa Island, a barren patch in the sea ten miles off the extreme southwestern tip of Haiti. Soon that too was hull down, and we were again the center of our unbroken circular universe. For the next forty-eight hours all that existed between heaven and earth was air and water, the plodding ship, and the great sun frying like an egg in the blue oven of the sky.

Early on the seventh day we raised the low mountains of

Panama and at two in the afternoon were at dock in Cristobal. Our shore leave was limited to one hour, allowing us time only for a quick one at Bilgay's and a session of violent guerrilla warfare with the lottery-ticket salesmen who seem to comprise two-thirds of the population of the isthmus. By four we were ascending the three steps of Gatun Lock to gain our transcontinental altitude of eighty-seven feet, and presently we were forging through Gatun Lake and into the Gaillard Cut. Beyond the raw, red flanks of the canal we could see the unbroken sweep of tropical forest. The sun was sloping away astern, for in conformance with the eccentric geography of the isthmus we were proceeding almost due *eastward* into the Pacific.

It was night before we reached the Pedro Miguel and Miraflores Locks and began our descent back to sea level. The tall towers of the naval wireless station were ablaze with colored lights, like Christmas trees; an airplane droned somewhere overhead, and brilliant aerial flare-bombs shattered the darkness over Panama City. All was light, sound and modernity in this thin ribbon of civilization that cut the silent night of the jungle. By eleven o'clock we were again at dock—this time in Balboa—and were permitted another hour of shore leave. More than half of the *Rita's* passengers were disembarking here, soon to be scattered through Central America, Colombia and Venezuela (all, that is, except the deaf-mute, who with indefatigable spirit was heading right back for New York on the next ship) and most of our time ashore was consumed by farewells on the pier. There were only twenty minutes left for us to visit the pride of Panamanian night-life—a nearby roadside restaurant which featured an exotic Latin dish known as the hot-dog and looked as if it had been bodily transplanted from the corner of Queens Boulevard and Jamaica Avenue.

Shortly after midnight the *Rita* was again under way, and some two hours later we were out on the Pacific. Unlike stout Balboa, however, we did not gaze at it with eagle eye, because our eagle eyes were shut in sleep.

Not once during our passage down the South Pacific did we sight either ship or land. Our only encounter of any kind was with the equator—impressive but thoroughly invisible—and to celebrate the occasion the sun disappeared and the wind came up. We were not yet in the cold Humboldt Current that washes up the west coast of South America from the Antarctic, but nevertheless it was a day for sweaters on deck and a wide berth to the swimming tank. King Neptune, we learned to our disappointment, does not hold court on the Grace Line ships. A few years ago, it seems, a Peruvian passenger was forced into the roughhouse against his will, duly lathered, shaved and ducked, and subsequently sued the Line for the indignities he had suffered—and won the case. Since then the Grace people have played safe. Anyone is free to shave himself and jump in the tank to his heart's content, but they will have none of it.

Late into the night we sat out on the top-deck. The soft trade wind purred through the *Rita's* rigging in its everlastingly futile effort to keep pace with the spinning midriff of the earth. To the east was the coast of Ecuador. Hidden from the eye, it was vivid in the imagination: white beaches fronting the Pacific; green waves of jungle slowly thinning as they rose to the foothills of the Andes; finally the great peaks themselves, implacable, appalling in their sheath of equatorial ice—Chimborazo, Cotopaxi. To the east too, behind our ring of night, was the barren islet of Gallo, from which Pizarro began his odyssey of blood and gold in the empire of the Incas. It was there that the indomitable roughneck, when his men refused to advance and prepared to return to Panama, drew his famous line upon the sand with his sword and stepped across it. "Friends and comrades," he said, "to the south are toil, hunger, nakedness, the shattering storm, desertion and death; to the north, ease and pleasure. There lies Peru with its riches; there Panama and its poverty. Each man must choose what best becomes a brave Castilian. As for myself, *me voy al sur.*" And south he went, with a little group of his

more reckless followers, and the first white shadow fell across the red man's Andes.

We were far from home, from the great cities and trade routes of Europe and North America, and it was strange to recollect that these remote shores and empty seas were well known to Europeans at a time when the eastern coast of the United States was still an undiscovered, undreamed wilderness. Within forty years after the first voyage of Columbus, the Inca Empire was in the possession of the Spaniards; and by the time the first settlers began clearing the forests of Jamestown, Plymouth and New Amsterdam, Lima had long since become the affluent "Cuidad de los Reyes," and her university and cathedral were aging beneath the bright Andean sun. Over the seas through which the *Rita* now was furrowing the galleons and brigs of the *Conquistadores* were tacking four hundred years ago.

How different were their wild journeys from ours, and yet how much the same! They had no steam, no sailing schedule, no cranes and customs officials awaiting them at port. I rather imagine they were somewhat the worse for dirt and vitamin-deficiency, and I am quite certain they did not pass their anxious days with shuffleboard and cocktails. But the cool trade wind that filled their canvas was the same as that which now sang sorrowfully in our radio wires. The stars which guided their courses were the same as those that winked above us that night. And the motives that drove them and the goal that beckoned them were not, after all, so very different from the motives and goal of the engineers, executives, salesmen and adventurers aboard the *Santa Rita*. "*Me voy al sur*" has not greatly changed its connotations since the Bandit of Estremadura drew his line in the sand on the Island of Gallo and stepped across it into blood and conquest. After four hundred years South America, to the white man from the north, is still the milch cow with the golden dugs.

During the night we had rounded Cape Blanco, westernmost point of the South American continent, and by morning were well into the Humboldt Current. Although we were less than

five degrees south of the equator it was cooler than at any time in the voyage since we had passed the latitude of Hatteras. The officers had doffed their white in favor of their blue uniforms and the thin mist that had crept up about us suggested deck-chair reading rather than shuffleboard or swimming tank.

Having doggedly seen Scarlett O'Hara through to her last-page destiny, I was at last free to look through the formidable library of books on South America which had been doing duty as ballast in my luggage. Being in the Humboldt Current, my thoughts, not unnaturally, first turned to the man for whom it was named. Alexander Humboldt, it has always seemed to me, is one of the least known of the world's truly great men. During the ninety years of his life, from 1769 to 1859, his enormous energy and intellect carried him into almost every known field of human activity and inquiry, and on his trip to South America alone (1799-1804) he accomplished what most scientists would be willing to call a full life's work. Selecting at random from his hundreds of achievements, his work during his five years along the Andes and the Amazon included the exploration of the Orinoco River; the discovery of the connection of the Orinoco and Amazon systems through the unique Casiquiare Canal; the first ascent of many Andean peaks, including Chimborazo and Pichincha; an investigation of the sources of the Amazon; a study of the transit of the planet Mercury and of the phenomenon of meteor-showers; an inquiry into the nature of volcanos and earthquakes; another into terrestrial magnetism; another into the climatic distribution of plants; another into mineral distribution. The list is endless, and the subsequent recording of all that he did, saw and investigated required the monumental total of thirty volumes. (I did not, I confess, have all thirty with me on the *Santa Rita*. Indeed, I compromised on one.)

Many other great travelers have visited South America since Humboldt, and the records of their journeys compose a travel literature second, I think, to none in the world. Charles Darwin, "The Voyage of the *Beagle*"; Henry Bates, "A Naturalist on

the River Amazons"; Viscount Bryce, "South America: Observations and Impressions"; W. H. Hudson, "Green Mansions" and "The Purple Land"; H. M. Tomlinson, "The Sea and the Jungle"; Theodore Roosevelt, "Through the Brazilian Wilderness"; Hiram Bingham, "Inca Land"—all these and many others have visited the far corners of the continent and recorded in books the fruits of their experiences. And let us not forget old William Prescott and his "Conquest of Peru." After ninety years his descriptions of the Andes and their people are among the best ever written, even though he was never closer to them than his home on Beacon Hill in Boston.

Through all of these—plus the works of some half-dozen more recent writers—I skipped and dodged, like a gourmet at a table of hors d'œuvres. The result was little knowledge, but much stimulation—and that was what I wanted. To know too much about a place—or, for that matter, a man—before having personal, first-hand contact is a dangerous thing. At best, you will have to unlearn your preconceived ideas and relearn them in the light of your own experience. At worst, those preconceptions will be so firmly entrenched that you can never lose them, and you might as well have stayed home in your own library, for all you apprehend with your own eyes and mind. My reading, diffuse and haphazard, had left me with no convictions; only contradictions and questions. Would Lima be the fascinating storehouse of history that my guidebook promised, or only an horrific conglomeration of bad statuary and souvenir-vendors? Would the Andes be as forbidding and their people as graceless and brutish as Harry Franck pictured them, or would they both be as colorful and fascinating as in Blair Niles's tales? Would the Incaic ruins fill me with a supernatural awe, as they did Prescott (who never saw them) or elicit a yawn, as they did from Harry Foster (who guided tourists among them)? All these things—and many others—I did not know and did not want to know. Soon I would be finding out for myself. Carefully I returned my library to its suit cases.

The Department of Modern Languages, I regret to report, was

not making much progress. Each morning our Spanish grammar and conversation-book accompanied us to our deck chairs, but once there their function was exclusively that of back-rests. To be sure, we had picked up a certain rudimentary vocabulary—chiefly from the bi-lingual menu in the dining saloon—but we were topheavy with nouns and possessed nothing but grunts with which to tie them together. In a conscience-stricken moment Ruth and I resolved that we would make it a point to acquire at least ten verbs a day. The adjectives, adverbs and prepositions could go jump in the ocean.

We were now steaming in a southeasterly direction down the long Pacific shoreline of Peru. This is the region known as the Rainless Coast—a narrow belt of desert between the Andes and the sea extending for fifteen hundred miles from Cape Blanco to Central Chile. At intervals it is broken by narrow belts of fertile soil—the valleys of the small streams which come down from the mountains. In them are located the important cities of the Peruvian seaboard—Lima, Callao, Trujillo, Pisco—and their surrounding irrigated fields and vineyards. In the endless miles between there is empty aridity, and the only life is clustered in the scattered oil and nitrate camps that dot the coast.

Four days out from Panama our ship's chart told us we were opposite Salaverry, the port of Trujillo. A few miles inland from the harbor are the famous pre-Incaic ruins of Chan Chan, and until recently the Grace Line's steamers used to put in at Salaverry to afford their passengers a day of sightseeing. But difficulties arose. It seems that hard by the ancient city was the flourishing hacienda of a wealthy Peruvian family named Herrera, and the Hererras were distinguished both by the excellence and potency of the grapes they grew in their vineyards and by their unfailing hospitality to tourists. The invariable effect of this hospitality was to divert the attention of the tourists from archaeology to less erudite matters, with the result that the ships were often delayed anywhere from three to six hours while officers and crew collected their errant charges from under

the bushes and tables of the hacienda. The blow-off came when on one voyage a group of returning archaeologists decided that the captain's bridge was airier than their own cabins and proceeded forthwith to move in. Since then the Grace Line has given Chan Chan and the hospitable Hererras as wide a berth as if they were quarantined for bubonic plague.

A long, slow swell was under us as we nosed southeastward toward the land. Desolate rock islands came up and slid past, white from surf to summit with the droppings of the guano birds. Soon we were passing through the narrow gate of the Callao breakwater, and a noisy launchful of generals, admirals and ministers-plenipotentiary was tootling out to meet us. We had bequeathed our matches to the steward (matches are a government monopoly in Peru, and the importation of foreign varieties is forbidden, under penalty of imprisonment) and looked the customs men squarely and righteously in the eye. By mid-afternoon Peruvian dust was in our eyes, Peruvian smells were in our noses, and a Peruvian cab driver was letting out his Peruvian Dodge on the straight macadam highway from Callao up to Lima.

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### III

#### "TURISTA"

**C**ALL me a coward and I shall resent it. Call me a liar and I shall demand a retraction. But call me a tourist and I shall give you a black eye.

The word *tourist* (or *touriste*, or *turista*) is virtually the same in all languages, both in pronunciation and connotation, and surely in none of them is there any other word that can match it as an epithet of opprobrium. To be a tourist is to live in a world of bored travel-agents, hostile hotel-keepers, condescending "old-timers" and a miscellaneous assortment of guides, head waiters, shopkeepers and cab drivers who half the time laugh at you, half the time snarl at you and all the time consider you legitimate and slightly feeble-minded prey. You have a reputation for complaining at everything, understanding nothing, and being interested only in spurious antiques and bad statuary. You are accepted, to a degree, for your solvency, and on rare occasions some kind-hearted eccentric may treat you as a mature adult with a mind and interests kindred to his own. But for the most part, you are a pariah, a blight and a plague of locusts. You arise in the morning and complain that the coffee is inferior to that at the Hotel Statler in Buffalo. You attend formal functions clad in plus-fours and a checked cap. You fight for half-an-hour with a hackman over a twenty-cent fare and uncomplainingly fork over twenty dollars for a two-dollar panama hat. You dislike crowds, local customs and native cooking, but swoon with delight at a closeup of La Perrichole's umbrella or Bolívar's chamber-pot. You tell the few residents you meet that you think they are doing quite nicely for a backward country, but wonder if their town wouldn't be improved by the introduction of central heating, Post Toasties and Rockefeller Center. You finally

fall off to sleep at night cursing that the bed-springs are made of discarded railroad tracks and praying that the U. S. Marines will arrive in a fleet of gunboats and show these lousy foreigners a thing or two. You are, in short, the lowest thing that crawls on earth outside of the jails, the asylums and the reptile house at the zoo. The only circumstance that makes life bearable for you is the happy fact that it is always the other fellow who is the tourist—never you.

Well, hardly ever. Naturally we did not relish the brand of shame on our brows and we dodged the issue whenever possible, but it was difficult to pose as mining engineers, munitions salesmen or the new ambassador from Denmark when two out of three of the party were female and every available inch of our luggage was plastered with a sinister “GRACE LINE—TURISTA.” When we were met at the dock in Callao by the Grace Line’s Señor Benj. Enriquez, who greeted us with “You’re the tourists, aren’t you?” and proceeded to enumerate the museums we would visit next day, we gave up the fight. *Turista* we were. *turista* we would confess ourselves, and the hell with it.

It is impossible for me to compare Lima with other South American capitals because I have seen no others. Judged by the standards of North America or Europe, however, it does not come off so well. Its modernity is still crude and ill-fitting, its antiquity shabby and ill-preserved. To the visitor—or tourist—collecting his first impressions it presents a panorama of wide plazas, narrow connecting streets laid out rectangularly, heavy traffic, horns, dogs and, in the dry season, dust. The cathedral, public buildings and old landmarks are clustered close to the south bank of the River Rimac, where Pizarro laid out the original city in 1535. North of the river the town peters out in a mile or so of drab, adobe slums. South from the cathedral, between the old Plaza de Armas and the new Plaza San Martín, are the main business thoroughfares—Union, Carabaya and Lampa. On them are located most of the shops, the tourist meccas and the offices of the big gringo companies. All three are narrow,

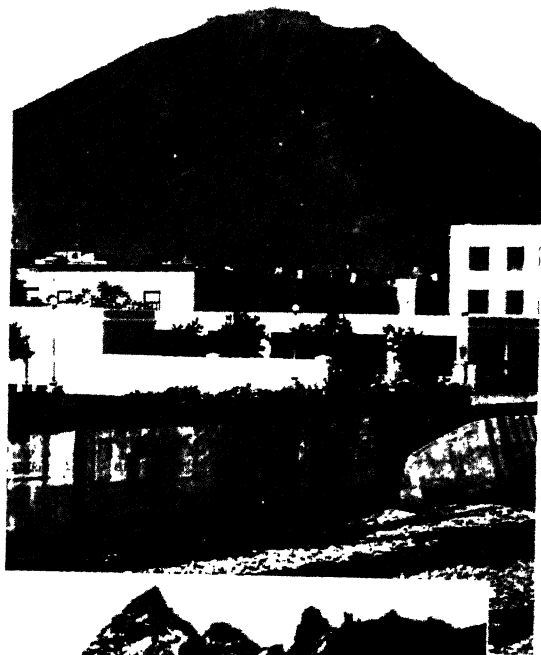
usually crowded, and perpetually the scene of ferocious traffic snarls. If there is any member of the human race more uninterested in his own life than a Peruvian chauffeur, or any sound devised by man or nature more violent than his horn, I have yet to encounter them.

Below the Plaza San Martín, where stand the Hotel Bolívar, the Metro movie palace and other gaudy monuments to progress, Lima changes its aspect and becomes a new, building city of wide avenues, green parks and bright stucco homes. Pushing steadily south and west, the municipal limits now extend to the ocean, including the residential suburbs of San Isidro, Magdalena, Miraflores and Chorrillos. North and south along the coast stretch a thousand miles of rainless desert, but on the narrow ribbon of land from Lima to the sea, where the Rimac waters the earth, there are trees and grass and flourishing crops.

The history of the average New World city is short and simple. A small group of pioneers build themselves a huddle of homes, concentrate on the raising of crops and children, and await the invention of trolley cars and soda fountains. Not so Lima. Long before the coming of white men its coastal valley was the site of great Indian cities. And when the Spaniards came in the sixteenth century, it was not to throw together a clapboard frontier village, but, consciously and deliberately, to build a City of the Kings—a metropolis worthy of symbolizing the dominion of Spain in the Americas. Four hundred years is a short span in the annals of Rome and Athens, but in the New World it is a veritable antiquity. Lima was an old capital, with traditions and rats when the *Mayflower* nosed its prow past Plymouth Rock.

The city's history falls into four periods: the aboriginal civilizations of the Incas and pre-Incas; the Spanish conquest and the colonial regime that followed; the Wars of Liberation and the ensuing republic; and finally the twentieth-century of Fords, frigidares and gringo corporations. In Lima's present physical aspect the four are inextricably jumbled together. On the eastern outskirts of the town is an American-operated cotton mill with the most modern machinery inside and a pre-Incaic wall still

LIMA'S  
BACKDROP:  
CERRO SAN  
CRISTÓBAL



TICLIO: HIGHEST STATION ON THE FERROCARRIL CENTRAL



standing around it. The aqueducts which carry the city's water supply down from the Andes were performing the same duty before the first white man set foot on South America; with comparatively few additions and improvements they remain as they were built by the Indians of a thousand years ago. The hand of Pizarro and his followers is everywhere apparent: in the layout and names of the streets, in the relics of the cathedral and churches, and, significantly, in the surrounding hills, long since gutted of their former rich lodes of precious ores. Bolívar is everywhere. You dwell at the Hotel Bolívar. You walk in the Plaza Bolívar. You visit the Bolívar Museum. You pass a statue of Bolívar (always he is mounted, and always the horse is rearing) every fifty paces you walk in any direction. I don't think I have encountered anywhere so ubiquitous a hero as is El Libertador in Lima. When you pause to consider that he was the liberator not only of Lima but of all Peru, and not only of Peru but of a third of the South American continent, the imagination totters. Many explorers have perished and none has succeeded in the quest for lost cities of antiquity in the dark heart of the Amazonian jungles. When the first fortunate one succeeds in his search, the odds are better than even that his earliest discovery will be a pre-historic monolith of El Libertador, in full panoply, astride his vertical horse.

As any Broadway musical show laid in the señorita belt can tell you, political strife in South America by no means ended with the Wars of Liberation from Spain. In fact, so accustomed are we in the north to hearing of the revolutions, civil wars, *coups-d'états*, *putsches* and purges which seem to constitute Latin-American politics that we are inclined to minimize, if not actually disbelieve, them. The stark fact remains, however, that in Peru, at least, Presidents do not die in bed. The successful Lima politico must have fire in his eye, chile con carne in his blood and a steel plate where his fifth rib ought to be.

During the late 1920's, the nation was dominated by Augusto P. Leguía, a diminutive but exceedingly high-powered firecracker,



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who had exploded his way into the Presidency via a *putsch* and whose subsequent administration was one of the most vigorous and progressive in Peru's history. Under his leadership illiteracy among the vast Indian and half-breed population was greatly reduced, army, navy and transportation facilities were modernized, and gringo capital for the exploitation of the country's natural resources was eagerly sought and welcomed. This was the heyday of nitrate, copper and sugar along the west coast, and Leguía's hospitable policy to the big British and American corporations eventually resulted in strong resentment from native landowners and business men, who saw no reason why foreigners should go on forever feeding on the fat of the land while they took the bones and gristle. A *coup d'état* resulted in 1930. Leguía was thrown into prison (dying shortly after his release in 1931) and Luis M. Sanchez-Cerro became dictator-president. Sanchez-Cerro's notion of vigor and progress, however, consisted exclusively of shooting anyone who had the bad taste to disagree with him politically. In a few years he had made himself universally unpopular, and there was general rejoicing when his inevitable assassination took place in 1933. The next, and present, national leader is General Oscar Benavides, an army man and former supporter of Leguía, who runs Peru under a mild form of military dictatorship.

Though Peru has come through the world depression rather well, the political future of the nation promises to be no less troubled than its past. The first adobe wall we encountered upon landing in Callao informed us succinctly that COMMUNISMO ES MUERTE; the second that COMMUNISMO ES INFIERNO; the third that COMMUNISMO ES BANDERILISMO, and so on, along every highway, on every factory wall. It does not require a psychoanalyst to draw the inference. A community which goes to such lengths to express its disapproval of something is obviously more than a little concerned and apprehensive about that something. Subsequent conversations with Peruvians and long-resident gringos confirmed this with emphasis.

The Communist Party is outlawed in Peru, as it is in virtually

all South American countries. But it is an excommunication in name only. One sees no red flags, no hammer-and-sickle; one never hears the "Internationale." But everywhere one sees and hears of APRA. APRA (its constituents are Aprista) means *Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana*, which in turn means communism in its legal South American disguise. It has no direct association with Soviet Russia (all foreign propagandists have been ruthlessly exterminated from Peru) and it does not adhere strictly to all the tenets of Marxian dogma; but its theories and program are in essence unrelieved red, and its effect on the Hearsts and D.A.R.'s of Lima is unmistakably the same as elsewhere.

To a North American, familiar not only with the name but with some of the practices of democracy, it is an almost incredible fact that the Apristas have held substantial majorities in the last two presidential elections in Peru and still have never had a man in office. After the imprisonment of Leguía they carried the national vote by a large margin, only to discover that Sanchez-Cerro had not waited for the formality of an election to establish himself in the Government Palace. It was the Aprista who subsequently did away with Sanchez-Cerro, but after his assassination a state of national emergency was declared, and General Benavides took over without subjecting the citizenry to the annoyance of voting. Again, in 1936, APRA led at the polls, but the election was disallowed (because of fraud, or inclement weather, or something), and Benavides remained in office. In Peruvian politics it is always nice to have votes on one's side, but it is far nicer to have the army.

How long the radicals will allow themselves to be hornswoggled in this manner it is hard to say. They lack a dominant leader, they lack funds, and most decidedly they lack the support of the powerful English and American corporations in Peru, who foresee a sudden end to their easy pickings if ever the red shadow of Marx falls across the Andes. Their leading spirits come from the professions and the universities (San Marcos, oldest seat of learning in the New World, is closed down on an average of once a month because of radical activities); their mass of votes from the

*cholos* and *peones*, the great class of half-breed workers who have been listening to the promises of the Catholic Church for four hundred years and are about ready to listen to someone else. Neither group is as yet powerful or cohesive enough for them to gain joint control of the government. Whether they eventually will or not, I shall leave to others to predict and time to tell. One thing, however, is apparent even to the casual observer: the political and social future of Peru will be determined on the battleground of communism versus fascism. And whichever wins, there will be a dictator. There always has been, whether he bear the name of *Presidente*, *Libertador* or Inca.

Sightseeing in a strange city is easy to revile, but hard to avoid, especially when you are in the power of as ferociously determined a mentor as the Grace Line. Willy-nilly, we saw the churches, the public buildings, the monuments, the museums, the spots-where and the houses-which. In our Señor Benj. Enriquez's ponderous wake we encountered the geography, history, architecture, restaurants and waterworks of the City of the Kings. Say what you wish against the "conducted tour," it at least enables you to dispose of what you *have* to do in quick, methodical fashion and leaves you free thereafter for what you *want* to do. In two short days we had conscientiously inspected and checked off:

1. The cathedral. A vast adobe structure on the Plaza de Armas, housing several impressive altars, two or three good paintings by Murillo and others, and the mummy of Pizarro—plus a few of his selected entrails in a glass jar.
2. The Government Palace. A rambling, one-story fortress, also on the Plaza de Armas. Guarded day and night. In the courtyard X marks the spot where Pizarro was slain by his disaffected followers.
3. The Torre-Tagle Mansion. The most elaborate and best preserved example of colonial architecture in Lima, a few blocks east of the plaza. Formerly the residence of a Spanish viceroy; now used as office for the foreign department of the government.

Susceptible *turista* are said to tremble with excitement at sight of its richly carved woodwork.

4. Inquisition Palace. On the Plaza Bolívar, formerly known as Inquisition Park. Once the seat of the high tribunal of the Church, it now houses the Peruvian senate during its infrequent sessions.

5. The House of Congress. Also on the Plaza Bolívar and also in infrequent use. (The comparative success of President Benavides' regime is largely attributable to the fact that he is one of the best congress-dissolvers in the history of Peru.)

6. University of San Marcos. It was more than a century old when Harvard was founded. Its traditions and buildings are ancient, but its students constitute the most radical element in present-day Peru.

7. Palace of Perrichole. Remember “The Bridge of San Luis Rey”? This is the estate built for the dancer, La Perrichole, by her viceregal admirer. It is now used as a barracks for the Presidential Guard, and a very fancy barracks it makes, too.

8. Parque de l'Exposicion. The site of an international exposition and fair held in Lima some years ago. Now an attractively shaded public park.

9. The National Museum. Comprising the second floor of Lima's city hall. Houses countless paintings—all bad—of Peru's national heroes, plus all the guns with which all the Presidents have been shot.

10. Bolívar Museum. Complete from equestrian statues to toothbrushes.

11. Archaeological Museum. Houses the most interesting of Lima's collections: mummies, artifacts and other relics of Inca and pre-Inca civilizations.

12. Italian Art Museum. We drew the line here.

By this time even the indefatigable Benj. Enriquez could prod us no farther, and our thoughts turned to the more mundane matters of food and drink. We proceeded to investigate what El Ciudad de los Reyes offered the animal appetites.

The only first-class hotel is The Bolívar, new and imposing on the Plaza San Martín. Its lobby at tea-time, and its grill at night,

are the center of the city's social life. The food is good, though imitative of European fare rather than native Peruvian; the rooms are large; the running water runs. But if you really want that scotch and soda don't try to order it on the telephone.

Other places to eat are the Maury, which is good, but not as good as its reputation; Leon's, boasting a modernistic dining room; La Cabaña, in the Parque de l'Exposicion, which features dancing and the only first-class jazz-band in Lima; and the Country Club ("Cawntree Cloob" to your cab driver) in the suburb of San Isidro, which is the favorite resort of resident gringos and the more affluent natives. Most of these places, like The Bolívar, present European menus, but if you possess a turn for adventure, native dishes may be had for the ordering. Peruvian food is very rich, and a small portion (though they never are small) will go a long way. The shrimps (*camarones*) are delicious and likely to turn up in anything from soup to ice-cream. *Palta* (alligator pear to you) is a part of practically every meal and is served in a bewildering variety of forms and dressings. The *corbina*, leading citizen of the Humboldt Current and a close relative to our northern halibut, is ubiquitous, and we seldom sat down to a Peruvian meal without encountering him. Highly recommended are *conchitas*, a small shellfish which seems to be a cross-breed between a clam and a mussel, and *pastel de choclo*, which is not, as you might expect, chocolate cake, but an ingenious and usually delicious corn soufflé. And when the exotic pales and the palate craves the old familiar, there is always *lomito hamburguesa con salsa de tomato Heinz* to fall back upon.

In the realm of beverages, the *turista* will encounter the same difficulties as in Europe in his eternal quest for ice water. It *can* be secured, however, if one has patience and the courage of his convictions. The Peruvian, as a matter of fact, does not greatly favor ice in any form, and such drinks as beer, ginger ale and highballs will arrive at the table lukewarm unless specifically ordered—and usually re-ordered—*bien helado*. The most common alcoholic beverages are beer, manufactured locally; Chilean wines, which at their best are almost indistinguishable from the better

French and Rhine vintages; and *pisco*, the native grape-brandy, pure Mickey Finn taken straight, but delicious in a cocktail or sour. The old argument about the quality of the local drinking water rages violently and eternally in Lima, as it does in every tropical city in the world. There are gringos who drink the tap-water regularly and swear it is as pure as the fountains of Peneus, and there are others who would rather shake hands with a leper than even brush their teeth in it. The Peruvian bottled waters are Chuquitanta, which is stale and flat, and Aqua Jesus, which is Pluto-esque both in taste and effect. Having tried them both, I soon determined to throw in my lot with the *bacteria au naturelle* as the least of three evils.

The *turista*, if he takes his calling seriously, is called upon to face many travails of the flesh and the spirit. Worst of all perhaps is that blank, barren hour that arrives at the end of the day's stint—when your appointed sights have been seen, your feet ache from endless miles of museum corridors, and your Señor Enriquez leaves you alone and helpless in the hotel lobby to face the evening as best you may. It is the day's dark nadir. You stall for time with a cocktail. You think of the letters you should write, but won't. You see the lights of the Metro Theater across the Plaza San Martín grimly beckoning you to Shirley Temple in "Pobra Niña Rica." You shudder at the possibility that life could come to that. And then, if you are as lucky as we were, Jerry Blanchard will suddenly appear in the lobby and say, "What the hell are you doing here?"

Jerry (Andover '25, Princeton '29) was theoretically in Lima in the service of W. R. Grace & Co., but it was not five minutes from the first greeting that he was officially enrolled as social director of the Ullman Lima Expedition. A casual acquaintance in the busy routine of life at home can easily and immediately become a blood-brother when encountered in a distant place, and in a week in Peru I came to know Jerry better than in seven years of prep school and college. A foursome, particularly when of equally divided genders, is far more congenial than a three-

some. Edna no longer was the third wheel on the social bicycle, and it was as a properly balanced quartet that we subsequently stepped forth. Strangely enough, however, it was we who showed him the town, rather than he us. Like many travelers abroad on business rather than for travel itself, he had confined his orbit almost entirely within the bounds of his work, and it remained for us to escort him on his maiden visits to the cathedral, museums, Incaic ruins and other non-Grace enterprises. He, for his part, introduced us to many of his associates in Grace & Company (Casa Grace to the initiated) and other of the gringo companies. They showed us the bars and we showed them the sights, and it was a highly satisfactory arrangement—at least for us.

Time, I suppose, may be said to exist in Peru as elsewhere. Night follows day, and vice versa, in the usual rotation, but there any kinship with our northern calendar or clock ceases. Each morning you awaken the odds are only two to one against its being a holiday; an American with a statistical bent recently computed that of the year's 365 days, 103, including the 52 Sundays, are full fiestas and another 70, including the 52 Saturdays, are half fiestas. Added up, the result seems to be that the Peruvian business man and the visiting gringo, whatever their other perils from occupational diseases, are in no danger of collapse from overwork. Just what causes all the holidays no one seems to know. The bulk of them, of course, are the Sundays and half-Saturdays; the numerous feasts, fasts and saints' days of the Catholic Church constitute another large block. Beyond these, however, the calendar is out in no-man's-land and no holds barred. During 1936, for example, Lima officially observed the American Independence Day, the French Bastille Day, Thanksgiving Day, and a day of mourning for the late King George V of England. Bolívar, of course, has his birthday, death-day, victory-day and other days, as have a host of other national heroes. In the latter case, however, observance is apt to vary with the sentiments of the political party in power. The illustrious late hero of one

administration will probably be just a dead chump to the next.

As goes the calendar, so goes the clock. Most business houses open at nine, close at noon, reopen at three and carry on doggedly till five, when the working day ends. Until recently the noonday siesta lasted for only two hours, but by government decree this had just been lengthened to three. Nobody knew why. Thanks to the Humboldt Current, Lima has a temperate climate, the sun is seldom out at midday, and when it is it's a flicker compared to, say, New York's in July. But everybody likes the three hours for lunch. Perhaps it's just an old Spanish custom.

Technically a siesta is supposed to be devoted to rest; actually, in Lima, it is consecrated almost wholly to eating. The Peruvian breakfast is scant, after the continental pattern, and by the time lunch arrives the citizenry are ready to do it full justice. Tea comes along between five and six, terminating in time for the big event of Lima's social day: the six-thirty movie show, known locally as the *vermouth*. Add the *vermouth* movie to death and taxes as the third great inevitable of Lima. Try as you will, you cannot keep out of it—no matter how manfully you grit your teeth and remind yourself that you did *not* journey six thousand miles to the west coast of South America to see Joan Crawford in "The Gorgeous Hussy." "Hoy!" the marquees shriek at you in beckoning familiarity. "Hoy!—Clark Gable," "Hoy!—Laurel and Hardy," "Hoy!—Mickey Raton." (Hoy, you subsequently discover to your disappointment only means "today.") The crowds pour in, and if you don't pour too you will find yourself alone in a deserted city. This might be endurable were it not for the fact that no amount of money, influence or graft can buy you a dinner in Lima earlier than nine o'clock. From six-thirty to eight-thirty Lima is at the *vermouth*, and those few unfortunates who have already seen all the pictures remain at tea until well past eight. In our eight days in Lima the earliest we succeeded in sitting down to dinner was eight-forty-five (the head waiter thought we were coming in for a late tea, but we fooled him); the latest was ten-thirty, and even then there were fellow-

diners in the restaurant who were at soup when we had reached dessert. To anyone planning to visit Peru who dislikes retiring immediately after a heavy meal I can offer only two suggestions: go hungry or stay up all night.

Hollywood has Lima pretty well by the throat, but there are occasional stage-plays to be found if you search diligently. Our only encounter with the Peruvian "legit" was at the Teatro Campoamor, where a Spanish troupe called the Cia. De Comedia Moderna Prodllo-Soria were holding forth in a season of stock. The opus we encountered bore the title of "Maria de la O," and though we understood only about five words an act, the general idea seemed to be that a wholesome country girl had fallen in love with an unwholesome city slicker, etc. We didn't need Spanish to carry on from there. The acting was of the declamatory variety, hurled forcefully into the teeth of the audience, and the scenery swayed like the *Santa Rita* in a blow off Hatteras. The spectators—what there were of them—sat on their hands and restrained their emotions admirably, and the carefully compressed features of some of my neighbors would have done justice to a Gilbert Gabriel or a John Mason Brown. It was all far too reminiscent of recent havoc to be much fun for Ullman.

There are two vantage points, I believe, from which the life of a city may best be seen and felt: its bars and its surrounding hills. Space and a decent reticence forbid a detailed chronicling of my *pisco*-sours and whiskies *con hielo*, but Cerro San Cristobal deserves mention. This isolated bump of the westernmost Andes (*Cerro* meaning hill) rises on the far side of the River Rimac, just north of Lima, and from its summit the eye can encompass the whole city and its surrounding terrain from the harbor of Callao to the distant purple mountains in the east. It was Christmas Eve when I made the ascent. The shops were just closing, and the streets and squares of the city were a bedlam of crowds, cars, soldiery, dogs and pealing church bells. All Lima, it seemed, was engaged in the single, concerted occupation of noise making, and the din, growing fainter with distance and altitude, fol-

lowed me up the slopes of the hill to its very summit. Around San Cristobal's base are clustered the most desolate slums of the city, where the *cholos* with their hundreds of children and thousands of dogs live in a poverty so absolute that it seems scarcely poverty at all, but a separate, sub-human plane of existence. Yet not one person accosted me for alms as I made my way through the wretched, unpaved streets, nor did my passing cause any noticeable curiosity among the idlers in the doorways, although a gringo with knickers and a camera could not have been a common spectacle in those parts.

Beyond the last adobe hovels at the very foot of the hill was a barren half-mile of sloping ground which served as Lima's hoboville. A few gaunt specters were foraging about listlessly among newspapers and tin cans; some sat still and stared at the sky; most were stretched on the earth asleep. One shriveled old man, prone beside the path I followed, had a small bell tied by a cord around his wrist. I recalled the stories of the medieval lepers in Europe and the bells they were compelled to wear to warn men of their approach. Could this man be a leper? I passed within a yard of him, but any lesions he might have had on face or hands were obscured by layers of hair and dirt. He lay there unconscious on the littered earth; vermin crawled on him and the stench of his own foulness rose from him; and whether or not he had leprosy seemed to make little difference. And I, with knickers and camera, with express checks in my wallet and a hot bath awaiting me at the hotel, passed him by and climbed the hill before me, from which the city of Lima spread out, twinkling and vibrant on Christmas Eve.

On the summit of San Cristobal are the skeleton remains of a former wireless-sending station and a huge cross, which is electrically illuminated at night and can be seen for miles around Lima. Its concrete base bore the usual scrawled animadversions anent *comunismo*, plus a boldly inscribed APRA, plus the initials of what must have been virtually the entire population of Peru. To the west the city and its suburbs were vague in mist, through which its clangor of bells and horns rose faintly and

diffused. Hard against the eastern cliffs the new concrete motor-road to the sierra cut its authoritative way; then swerved off abruptly toward the mountains. The foothills of the Andes themselves, brown and forlorn, reached endlessly eastward behind San Cristobal, in ever-rising tiers, and a cool wind blew over them toward the Pacific. I remained on the summit for an hour, and in that time no other person appeared. The lights of the cross flashed on, blotting out the Andes with their glare, illuminating the carved initials and APRA and COMUNISMO ES MUERTE. And they helped light my path down the hill, through the gathering dusk of Christmas Eve, to where the old man with the bell was stirring from his sleep and looking toward me with eyes that could not see.

From Jerry we learned much about W. R. Grace & Company and the other American and British corporations in whose hands is so large a part of the commerce and industry of Peru. The mining companies mine, the railway companies run trains, and the banks bank; but the general trading concerns such as Grace, Milne & Company and Wessel-Duval have their finger in practically everything. The Grace people, for instance, in addition to operating a freight and passenger steamship service, run a bank, several cotton mills, many sugar plantations and a machinery plant. Jointly with Pan-American Airways they operate the West-Coast Panagra Air Service, and in their spare time they sell Goodrich tires, Quaker Oats, Royal typewriters, Johnnie Walker whisky, Hempel paints, Gordon gin and Atlas diesel engines. They are "importers of naval stores and general merchandise," conduct a shipyard for the construction of launches and yachts, and maintain a tourist travel bureau. They can also tell you the way to the post office.

The size of South America is so great and the amount of capital required for its commercial exploitation so large that only the biggest corporations have been successful there. For a hundred years and more individuals and small groups of colonists have gone to the west coast in quest of their own private El Dorados,

but their ventures have almost invariably come to grief. Sometimes it may have been the shiftlessness or unscrupulousness of the people themselves; sometimes it may have been old devil tropics: whisky, coca leaves, Indian wives. But more often their failure has been due to simple economic rules. You can raise the best bananas in all Colombia, but it won't do you any good if you can't get them to market. You can stake out the richest lode of silver in the Andes, but you won't make a dollar from it if you haven't a smelter and a railroad to go with it. South America offers little in the way of manufacturing and transportation facilities, and the man with a load of raw material—be it copper, rubber, sugar, cotton or whatever—must be prepared to transport, refine and market it himself. The individual obviously cannot do this; the corporation can. That is why the corporation has the field of South American plant and mineral resources pretty much to itself.

Through Jerry, as well as other channels, we soon met and learned something about the west coast gringos. They are divided pretty much into two groups: the old-timers, who have been there practically since Pizarro and consider Peru their permanent home, and the younger men, who are down for two- or three-year terms with their companies and then plan to go home and become chairman of the board. Of the older generation many originally arrived as fortune-hunters on their own; many more first came down in the heyday of the nitrate fields, only to have the post-war invention of synthetic nitrate knock their industry and livelihood out from under them. Almost without exception they are now working for one or another of the big corporations, side by side with the youngsters who yearly arrive fresh from Yale, Princeton or Oxford with ambition, wanderlust and two years of prep-school Spanish. The younger and older generations of gringo are vastly different in experience, personality and purpose, but on three points they are solidly united: they all are extremely race-conscious, they all drink scotch, and they all hate tourists.

On Sunday afternoon the band plays, the sun shines (optional), and Lima turns out for the bullfight. In point of fact, it is about the only South American city that still does, for the sport has been banned in most of the Latin Republics. Peru, however, still has her *plazas de toro*, and Lima's is reported to be one of the largest and finest in the world. Well laden with cushions, cameras and qualms, we followed the crowd to see what we should see.

I suppose everyone has his own preconceptions of a bullfight before he has seen one. Mine were a badly jumbled mixture of Ernest Hemingway and lady-tourists' horror-stories, with a slight garnishing of Rudolph Valentino in "Blood and Sand." The first view of the ring as we entered did little either to confirm or dispel them. Rickety wooden stands plastered with ads for Studebaker cars, Remington typewriters and Jantzen bathing-suits surrounded an oval dirt enclosure perhaps a hundred yards in diameter at its widest point. The crowd was eating peanuts and stamping impatiently for activities to begin; two uniformed bands were playing hell with last year's Broadway song-hits. From long instinct I measured with my eye the distance from where home plate should have been to the right-field bleachers. Soon the Yanks would be piling out of the dugout—

Before going any farther let me point out that the sport of bullfighting is possessed of a highly intricate tradition and technique; that this was my first—and probably last—bullfight; and that therefore my description of it will be highly uninformed, except as concerns my own reactions. There are six bulls on the usual program, and each fight is divided into four parts: the tiring of the bull by the matadors' capes; the goading by the lances of the mounted picadors; the insertion of the barbed darts by the banderilleros; and, finally, the slaying by the matador. Ordinarily each part of the fight lasts about five minutes, for a total of twenty, but this can vary with the matador—and the bull.

Both bands began blaring at once. The crowd yelled. The gates at one side of the arena swung open, and the bullfighters entered in dress parade—cocky, colorful and a little bedraggled.

There were bows, cheering, hand waving. Then, suddenly, the parade was gone, and Bull No. 1 was in the ring, head down and looking for trouble. Three matadors, their pink capes extended, advanced to meet him, and the fight was on.

Señor Luis Gomez, Grace Line *turista*-warden and first *aficionado* of Lima, has told me it is not good when a bull is too rambunctious at the outset; he tires himself too quickly and is easy pickings for the matador later on. By the connoisseur's standard, therefore, Bull No. 1 was perhaps too willing, but to the tyro he was impressive. The men twirled their capes and pirouetted on their toes; the animal charged and countercharged. Sometimes he caught the cape on his horns, but never the men. Time and again he would go for them, but always there was only the cape when he arrived, and the man elusively to one side. On some charges the margin of the miss was a yard or more, on others but a few inches. Matador twirled, cape fluttered, and each time a ton of beef went slamming by. At this stage of the fight one's sympathies were all with the men. They were unarmed, looked small and fragile. In comparison, the bull was an express train with spikes, wide open and off the tracks.

Presently a trumpet sounded—round 2 coming up. Two picadors on their hide-and-bone nags entered the arena. This was the part of the fight we were not looking forward to. Ruth and Edna put their programs in front of their faces, occasionally letting an eye roll over the top. The horses were ancient and rickety, better dead; but not necessarily this way. Each had one eye bandaged, and their riders maneuvered to keep the bull always on the blind side. Thus the horses never knew what was coming; they simply stood and took it. We were at least relieved to see that they wore heavy leather shields across their chests as protection.

The bull eyed them and seemed glad of their appearance. Here at last was something more substantial than a fluttering cape into which to sink his horns. Down went his head, and he charged. The picador guided his horse with one hand, not to avoid the bull, but to receive the full impact of his rush. With the other

he held the blunt lance with which he must try to hold the bull off. Contact! Horse and man were high in the air, the bull underneath them, goring. Then a writhing tangle of bodies, legs, hoofs, horns, lance. The picador leaped clear. The horse was down kicking, with the bull on top of him. The matadors rushed in, waving their capes, and lured the bull away. The horse staggered to its feet, and the picador remounted, to loud boos from the crowd. At the time I did not know the reason for their disapproval. Perhaps the picador had managed badly; or were the spectators resentful of the horse's plight? Later Señor Gomez enlightened me—they disapproved of the protective leather across the horse's chest, which resulted in the bull's merely throwing him, but not piercing him. Your true *aficionado* likes his arena well smeared with entrails.

The next horse and the next charge gave better satisfaction. The bull rushed, the picador maneuvered, and the horse, though its blindfolded eye was toward the bull, seemed to know what was coming. It lifted its feet gingerly, gave a convulsive start, shook so that its rider's lance trembled in his hand. This time the horns came in lower, caught the horse not on the chest, but underneath, on the unprotected belly. Up they went again, then down again—this time in blood and guts and salvos of applause. When the bull was finally lured off the horse was hoisted to its feet and led away. Outside its intestines—what was left of them—would be stuffed back inside, plus several handfuls of sawdust to sop up the hemorrhage. He would be back later to let another bull try his luck. I looked at the girls and was glad they were doing all right. They were reading their programs as they had never read before, but they had not lost their lunches.

On one of his charges the bull did not get to the horse at all. The picador lunged with his lance, caught him in the hump where the back of his neck met his spine, and leaned with all his strength. Horse and rider went up in the air, the lance swayed and bent, but held. The bull was stopped dead in its tracks, and the fight stopped entirely while the picador took his bows. It had been an impressive exhibition of strength and skill.

When the second horse had been led away to his surgery and sawdust, the banderilleros appeared, and the fight entered its third stage. The banderillero comes out afoot and alone, and his object is to insert four tiseled darts, two at a time, into the bull's back near the hump of the neck. The purpose of this is both to goad the now tiring beast to further belligerence and to sever a group of nerves controlling the neck muscles, so that he will be unable to toss his head when the matador comes out for the killing. Its actual performance, however, is usually the high point of the fight, both in skill and excitement.

The first banderillero had difficulty in attracting the bull; after the capes and the horses the man was not so attractive a target. But when finally it came on, it came with a will. Poised on tiptoe, his darts held high above his head, the man waited motionless until the horns were a yard from his chest. Quickly he side-stepped, leaned far over the bull's head as it went past and brought down his arms. The two darts swayed in the animal's back, and the crowd cheered. Then one fell out, and it groaned. The banderillero tried again and got it in; then his partner appeared and, to the crowd's vast approbation, drove home both his darts on the first attempt. By this time the bull was no longer enjoying the fun. He tried to lift his head, but could not, and twitched his back violently in an effort to rid himself of the darts. But they held fast, and the more he shook himself the thicker was the stream of blood that poured from his wounds.

Another trumpet—fourth and final round. The matador crossed to the center of the ring—Mancho Martinez, a young Mexican bearing the formidable sobriquet of "The Aztec Lion." He took his bows, threw his cap over his shoulder into the stands, and unsheathed his sword. Then, covering it with his scarlet matador's cloak, he approached the bull. I saw now what Gomez meant when he said it is bad if a bull is belligerent too soon. This one had worn himself out. Weak with fatigue and the pain of the swaying darts, he was wandering aimlessly about the arena. "Hey, toro!" called the matador. The bull paid no attention. Matador followed bull around the ring, cornered him, con-

fronted him with his scarlet cloak. "*Hey, toro!*" No response. He extended his sword and nicked the bull's snout. "*Hey, toro, toro—hey!*" The crowd was stamping and hooting for action. The bull pawed the ground, seemed to hunch himself for a charge, then turned his back and trotted away. Eloquent razzberries came from the bleachers. The Aztec Lion extended his hands to them and shook his head. What could he do? "Kill him," yelled the crowd, "kill him!" Whether they were referring to the bull or The Aztec Lion was not clear.

At all events The Lion went after his prey again, cornered him again, and this time succeeding in eliciting a half-hearted charge. As the bull came in he whirled, passing his cloak-sheathed sword an inch above the lowered horns. On the next rush he repeated the performance, his body and the bull's almost touching as the beast tore past. The crowd appreciated this—applauded him. As the bull squared off again he extended his sword, standing on tiptoe and sighting along its blade. But again the bull walked away, and the crowd hooted. Exasperated by their taunts, the matador ran after the bull, confronted him, and while it stood stock-still, leaned over its horns and plunged his sword deep between the shoulders. The animal shuddered but did not fall. Blood streamed from its mouth and nostrils and bubbled over the hilt of the sword embedded in its back. It trotted once around the arena, and back across the center, as if quite unaware that a yard-long steel blade was sawing through its vitals. Then suddenly, without warning, its front legs crumpled. It tried to rise, failed, and sank to its knees. After resting thus for a moment it rolled slowly over and lay on its side in the dust, twitching.

The fight was over. A man ran out and drove a dagger into the bull's spinal cord, below the skull. Another pulled out the matador's sword and wiped it. The Aztec Lion himself walked around the ring bowing to very moderate applause and searched for his chosen señorita to reclaim his hat. A team of horses had been brought in and hitched up to the dead bull. Now they started galloping. Once around the arena they went; then off. The band

played "Yessir, That's My Baby," and all that was left of Bull No. 1 was a wide swathe in the dirt, flecked with blood.

Fight followed fight—there were six in all—and each was different from the others, and yet the same. Sometimes the bulls were rampaging at the outset and docile at the end—like No. 1. Sometimes they started slowly and had to be pursued all over the ring by the matadors, only to finish in a blaze of rage and glory. One animal would not fight at all and was butchered sloppily amid jeers from the crowd. Another, as soon as he entered the ring, was adjudged too young and sent back to the corral. And as the animals' performances varied, so did the men's. In one fight the banderilleros would insert their darts gracefully and precisely in one attempt; in the next they would have to try again and again before the barbs held. With one bull a matador would effect the death-stroke cleanly, with immediate effect; with another he would blunderingly make thrust after thrust, until the creature finally died from loss of blood. Yet in this variety there was a monotonous sameness; the sameness of routine, of blood, of the inevitable outcome. However gallantly he may fight, however many horses he may gore and swords he may defy, the bull cannot win. His death sentence goes into operation the moment he steps into the ring, and there is no reprieve. The issue in the fight that ensues is not who will be the victor, but how long the foredoomed victim will endure. If, by definition, a sport is a contest in which either side can conquer, bullfighting is not a sport. It is a planned and ordered exhibition of killing.

The average American usually reports his first bullfight as a pretty unpleasant experience. Mine was no exception. A good bull and a good matador can between them make a stirring, colorful show—and let no one disparage the courage and skill of the bullfighters—but always there are the gored horses and the blood and the foreknown outcome. And if, as sometimes happens, the bull is docile and unwilling to fight, the proceedings degenerate into a pointless butchery. It is hypocrisy to say that a bullfight is not exciting. Combat, blood and death are always exciting. But it is the spurious excitement of the spectator, the

noncombatant, the fellow who sits securely in his grandstand seat and knows he himself is safe.

The bull is killed, the matador runs great risks, but I think it is the spectator at a bullfight who comes off worst of all. Vicariously he revels in blood and dust and glory. Behind stout barriers he sits in judgment and shouts for action. He is the human animal at his most secure, most critical, most cruel. Death in the afternoon costs ten *soles*, and he wants his money's worth. Tell me the bullfight's exciting, friend *aficionado*, and I shall agree with you. I was excited myself. But when you leap to your feet shouting for blood please don't expect me to think very highly of you as a human being. "Kill him! Kill him!" Why don't you go out there and kill him yourself, you big stiff?

After some five days in Lima I learned how to pronounce Pachacamac and Cajamarquilla and could therefore mention them with impunity. They are not soft-drinks but ruins, both located within a short distance of Lima and both well worth a visit if one's fancy runs to archaeology, skulls, and the impermanence of the works of man. Jerry had been in Peru for six months without encountering a ruin, which is tantamount to crossing the River Styx without encountering a dramatic critic. He was proud of his unique record, but consented to accompany us on our investigations. As a result he is still picking pre-Incaic dust from his ears.

Cajamarquilla, the more ancient of the two ruined cities, is perhaps seven hundred years old and was built by the Indian inhabitants of the lower Rimac Valley in the days before they fell subject to the conquering Incas. Most of the records of their civilization—even their tribal name—are lost in the blank pages of time. Only their city remains, roofless and half-covered with the drift-dust of centuries, but with massive adobe foundations and walls still intact. These Indians, like their Spanish conquerors after them, seldom used stone in their building, and in a rainy, or even moist climate, Cajamarquilla would long since have been obliterated. But here on Peru's west coast, where it has rained

perhaps a total of seven days in seven centuries and the air itself is virtually an embalming agent, the walls and stairways remain almost untouched by time since the days when a forgotten people built them, moved among them and called them home.

The city is located about twenty miles east of Lima, at a point where the last spurs of the Andes fall off into the coastal plain. High on these spurs, on either side, can be seen the remnants of watchtowers, and the flanks of the surrounding hills are still scalloped with the contours of their old terraces. Once watered and fructified by irrigation, these terraces have not been used for agriculture since the coming of white men and have returned to their natural rugged aridity. But farther up the Rimac Valley the prehistoric irrigation ditches are even today used as part of Lima's system of water supply. The ruins of the city itself were among the first in Peru to be discovered and investigated by archaeologists. Some artifacts—pottery and crude implements—have been discovered, but for a ruin so accessible and carefully combed, Cajamarquilla is jealous of its secrets. Some authorities believe it was built by the Chimus, whose great capital city of Chan Chan has recently been discovered farther north near modern Trujillo. Others think it was the home of a still earlier people, subsequently conquered by the Chimus, who in turn fell prey to the conquering Incas from the mountains. In any event, many conquerors, as well as many years, have come and gone in the valley of the Rimac since the day of its foundation.

Cajamarquilla is pre-Incaic. Pachacamac, on the other hand, dates from the great years of the Incas and was probably still inhabited when Pizarro founded Lima in 1535. It is situated thirty miles south of the capital on one of a thousand barren sand hills that rise and fall along the Pacific coast. Motoring down along the new asphalt highway that extends to Pisco and its vineyards, we were, within fifteen minutes from the hotel, out of sight of any life or habitation on a forlorn desert of flats and dunes. To the west was the ocean, broken here and there by the gray outlines of guano islands; north, south and east, was brown

desolation; the sky was without color or cloud, as empty and barren as the earth. It was a place of mirages; constantly as we sped forward we seemed to be heading directly for the sea. We could see it stretched out ahead, between the dunes and beyond them, its rippling surface alive in the sun; and off to the east there was a ship, clear in its outline, sailing upon it. But as constantly as we approached it the water receded. When we should have been in its midst we were still on the same brown sand; and when we passed the ship it was no longer a ship but a jagged rock. At one point—suddenly and quite startlingly—we crossed a stream. It trickled thinly down from the foothills to the ocean, and along its banks grass and a few shrubs made a tiny green thread, sharp and startling in a world without color or change. Then sand again, and the sterile dunes, and the sterile sky. We knew that the sea to west of us was real and the sea ahead was not, but in the world through which we now were moving reality and unreality had lost their differentiation. A phantom fleet might have come up over the horizon and sailed into the hills. A long-dead Indian king, with all his ancient retinue, might have passed us silently on our endless road. Lima, men, the time and space in which we lived were somehow gone and lost, as by the turning of a corner. Reality was here, but another reality—one we did not know and shrank from knowing. Our breathing, the ticking of my watch, the steady purr of the car's motor were suddenly sounds we had never heard before.

Presently there was a dune among the many ahead that seemed different. The outline of its summit was sharper, darker against the empty sky. Another mirage, perhaps? Or nothing? Or something for which we had no name? As we moved forward, however, it did not vanish, but grew clearer. Its lines took form, solidified into walls and battlements, assumed the planned, familiar symmetries of structures built by men. It was the citadel of Pachacamac. High above its summit three buzzards were circling. At the foot of its nearest slope was a parked Ford and near it a group of men with picks and shovels, digging. These were the first living things we had seen since leaving the suburbs of Lima,

and even the buzzards were welcome. We had reached the dead city of Pachacamac, but simultaneously we had returned to the world we knew and belonged in.

The archaeology of Pachacamac is better known than that of Cajamarquilla, largely because it dates from more recent times and its remains are less deeply buried in the drift-dirt of the years. It is built about the four sides of a great, irregular dune, the summit of which was formerly the palace of the priests and the Temple of the Sun. Judging from its extent, it must once have held a vast population, and from its innumerable chambers and tunnels have been excavated many of the most important, as well as best-preserved, relics of Inca civilization. The Incaic people, like the Egyptians, mummified their dead and interred beside them the most precious and useful of their worldly possessions. Incaic mummies, however, are not in erect posture, but doubled over in a sort of squatting position, their knees drawn up to their chins and their arms pressed tightly against the sides of their heads, as in attitudes of lamentation. Also, they were not sealed in coffins, but in rough-spun sacks, into which, beside them, their possessions were placed. The opening of the sack was then sewn tightly, until the whole resembled a bulging load of potatoes, and the corpse was ready for the grave. Several mummies from Pachacamac are on view in the Archaeological Museum in Lima and are probably better specimens scientifically than esthetically. Inca royalty was buried in an upright sitting posture, and the few royal mummies I saw had weathered the centuries with dignity. But the rank and file—considerably in the majority in the museum, as in life—were invariably compressed in death into the traditional cramped squat, and the results, five centuries later, are apt to display a crude, often gruesome, humor. The buried possessions—pottery, trinkets, tools, weapons—are, on the whole, far better preserved and easier on the eye than their former owners.

In size, variety and perfection of stonework Pachacamac is reputed not to compare with the vast Incaic ruins of Cuzco and Macchu Picchu, but it has its compensating attractions for the

visitor—and particularly the amateur archaeologist. In the eternal dryness of the climate little has been weathered away, and one can pass through the rooms, corridors and doorways of many dwellings that lack only their original bamboo roofs and simple furnishings to make them exactly as they were when occupied by their long-dead tenants. And in Pachacamac, too, you don't require a steam shovel and a Ph.D. degree to engage in a bit of excavation on your own. Our dependable Señor Enriquez had supplied us with pick and shovel, and, digging at random for perhaps an hour in the loose, dry earth, we uncovered a half-dozen skulls, many fragments of pottery, part of a burial sack (but no mummy), and several lengths of *quipus* cord, the knotted strings by means of which the Indians did their only known recording of figures and words. Nothing of intrinsic value or scientific interest, to be sure, but considerably more satisfying than someone's else exhumations behind a labeled glass in a museum. The only thing I should have liked to keep was a *quipus*, but they crumbled in my fingers. Edna, however, in whom ruins bring out unfortunate ghoulish tendencies, carried off an assortment of jawbones, mummy-sacks and such, which would give the customs inspectors a good workout on her return to New York.

Pachacamac has its own odor and its own sound. The odor is hard to define—a faint, acrid tang of decay. The sound—magnified out of all reality by the vast silence in which it exists—is the thin whirring of the wings of buzzards and condors as they wheel endlessly above the summits of the dunes. The buzzards, which are greatly in the majority, are at home on this bleak coast; but the condors are victims of an unhappy fate. Native to high altitudes of the central Andes, an occasional two or three venture, or are blown, down to the low plains of the Pacific. There, in the unaccustomedly heavy atmosphere, they are unable to fly with their natural power or to gain sufficient altitude to enable them to return home. Prisoners to the ground and the heavy air of sea level, they perch sorrowfully upon the ridges of the dunes or launch desperate, straining flights toward the dis-

tant mountains. But always they fall back, and soon they die, and their carcasses become part of the charnel ground of Pachacamac. I think I shall never recall the still, dead city in its still, dead desert by the sea without bearing in my mind the whirr of the wings of the great condors—trying to live.

Judging from bookstore displays, Lima's reading tastes are catholic. "Don Quixote" is leader on most shelves, but there are Dantes, Voltaires, Hugos, English classics, Gorkis, Dreisers, paper-back detective stories and pretty nearly everything else. Religious treatises abound; also pamphlets on "How to be a So-and-So," "What to do about Such-and-Such," *undsowweiter*. Looking through the modern Spanish authors I recognized Unamuno and came to an abrupt halt. I confess myself a bit appalled when I considered that I did not know the name—nor had I read a book—of a single South American writer.

The leading Lima newspaper is *El Comercio*, conservative and pro-gringo corporation. The leading (and only) English language paper is *The West Coast Leader*, published, edited, written and probably linotyped weekly by one Mr. Griffis, a tall, ageless American who apparently far antedates Pachacamac as a Peruvian landmark. The favorite moving-picture actor, at the time of our sojourn, was Shirley Temple; the favorite fictional character (no competitors) was Tarzan. The favorite magazine (at least *my* favorite, although I've never got farther than the cover) was—simply and beautifully—*Sexo*.

Next to dogs, Lima was fullest of policemen. There was not only one, but usually three, at every corner, not to mention the middle-of-the-blocks. Solving crimes, apprehending thieves and similar strenuous activities are said not to be their forte, but they were polite, helpful and marvelously adept at not being exterminated by Lima's ferocious traffic.

What with the police force, the army and navy, every third man in the city seemed to be in uniform. The rank and file were

practically all *cholos* (Indians) or *mestizos* (half-breeds); the officers were all white and most of them pretty spiffy.

Like those of most of the Latin-American republics, the Peruvian armed forces are trained by foreign officers. In Peru's particular case the army enjoys French sponsorship, the navy, American. Military service is compulsory, and an army career is almost *de rigueur* for the not too bright sons of the better families. There, however, the donning of a uniform does not involve the loss of many civilian liberties and prerogatives which it does in the United States. Quite the contrary. South American Presidents run things pretty much the way the army likes them to be run, or they aren't President very long.

Once you have your passport, visa, certified certificates from police and health authorities, and are safely in the country, Peru is not bad, as small countries go, about papers, documents and such. The police take your passport when you land, keep it a few days and return it with an identification certificate. That is all you need if you remain in Peru for two months or less. If you stay longer you require a super-identification certificate, or *carnet*, and life grows more complex. Cigarettes may be brought into Peru in moderate quantities, but there is a strict embargo on foreign matches and lighters. The government operates a match monopoly, has been losing money on it, and doesn't like it. Not only are the customs officials hawk-eyed after contraband, but any citizen in the street is supposed to—and often will—report you if he sees you using a foreign match. Reward to him, twenty *soles*. Penalty to you, plenty. Better be caught with a dismembered corpse in your trunk than a Dunhill lighter.

Favorite street-signs in Lima:

CAJA D'AHORRAS—not the Chamber of Horrors, but the Savings Bank.

ESCUELA INTERNACIONALE DES CORRESPONDENCIA—our old friend, the I.C.S., of Scranton, Pa.

On the morning of our ninth day at the Gran Hotel Bolívar the rooster which inhabited the roof across the street crowed as usual. Presently the phone rang, the *café-complets* came up and the taxi horns yelped outside, all as usual. It was just another day for Lima, just another sailing for the Grace Line, but it was separation for Ruth and me.

The battle of True Love vs. The Amazon had been going on ever since our arrival in Lima. A dozen times I had been on the point of renouncing my proposed trip across the continent and returning home with Ruth; and a dozen times she had been perilously near consigning herself to three months of mud, mosquitoes and misery in the tropical jungles. But sober counsel had at last prevailed. On the one hand, if alligators and dysentery were what I needed to make me forget my good friends of the dramatic page, there was no reason why I should not seek them out. On the other hand, there seemed no compelling necessity for Ruth to abdicate her status as a normal, civilized woman simply because her husband had suddenly gone slightly insane. It had therefore been decided that Ruth and Edna would return home direct from Lima and that I would proceed across South America in such fashion as my psychopathic interests directed. Riding down to Callao in the cab that morning I'm afraid we both felt the decision left something to be desired.

When we reached the pier the *Santa Clara* was alongside—steam up, stevedores shouting, hawsers and winches creaking her cargo into her holds. She was due to sail at ten, but at ten she was still there. At ten-thirty she was still there. She may still have been there at eleven, but I wasn't. I rode up in the cab from Callao to The Bolívar, went into the empty bar and ordered a *pisco-sour*. When that was gone I ordered another.

That night was New Year's Eve, and there were highjinks at the Country Club in celebration thereof. We attended en masse—Jerry and I and an assortment of young blades from Casa Grace, to whom I was blood-brother for the night and never saw again. I looked vaguely eccentric, but at least got by the gate in my borrowed plumage—Señor Gomez's too-small dinner

jacket and Jerry's too-large dress-shirt, collar, shoes and socks, plus my very own underdrawers. Everyone says it was a fine party. There was plenty of whisky and plenty of champagne, and the chivalry of all Lima was there: gentlemen in dress uniform and gentlemen in tails, hundreds of lovely women in lovely gowns, and more ambassadors than head waiters. There were even, I was told, two or three Peruvians.

At precisely one minute of twelve the orchestra, in accordance with old Latin tradition, began playing "Auld Lang Syne." The lights went out, and the men who were dancing kissed their partners. Happy New Year! I found a bench on the lawn just big enough for my highball and myself and sat looking at the moon. I had a pretty good idea how H. G. Wells's old Dr. Cavor felt when his companion sailed away in the rocket and left him there.

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## IV

### MOUNTAINS AND MEN

NEW YEAR'S DAY, 1937, in Lima—not unlike other New Year's Days in other climes—dawned heavy with headaches and vain regrets. This particular hangover, however, had one paramount virtue—it enabled me quite successfully to forget the pangs of loneliness in favor of the pangs of the flesh. I have a recollection of several theoretically beneficial gin-and-gingers, a Laurel and Hardy *vermouth* and a pretty strong conviction that life left much to be desired. The next day Jerry and I went up to Chosica—he for the week-end, I for an indefinite term.

Going up to Chosica you travel on the Central Railroad of Peru, and traveling on the Central Railroad of Peru, you experience a trip such as you will not have had anywhere else in the world. At the risk of sounding like a booklet advertising special holiday rates, I herewith go on record that I cannot imagine a more interesting or exciting journey.

The Central (*Ferrocarril Central del Peru* in its native habitat) runs from Lima due east into the Andes as far as the mountain mining-town of Oroya. From Oroya, the main line cuts south to Huancayo and Huancavelica, while a branch extends north to Cerro de Pasco. There are a few other branches and extensions—to Callao, to the seaside resort of Ancon, to the copper mines of Morococha—and that is all. Total mileage—less than three hundred. Through passenger trains per day—one in each direction. Industries served—Cerro de Pasco Copper Company and three or four smaller mining outfits. Profit to stockholders—damned little. In size and commercial importance, the Central is assuredly not among the world's great railroads. Compared to the huge

systems of the United States, it's practically the Toonerville Trolley, but in boldness of concept and ingenuity of construction, it stands by itself. Puffing and tooting in their far-away Andean pockets, its trains bear cheering witness to the fact that, even in the machine-world of the twentieth century, a thing does not always have to be big to be magnificent.

The Central owes its existence to the genius and perseverance of one Henry Meiggs, an American who seems to have been quite as remarkable as his railroad. As a young man in the States, before and during the Civil War, he engaged in a variety of occupations without success. He first came to South America by sailing around Cape Horn to the west coast with a cargo of lumber. Realizing a substantial profit from this venture, he settled in Chile and engaged in a series of spectacular promotion and exploitation schemes in the new and rapidly developing country. Some were successful; most were not, and at one time he was in debt for over a million dollars. Though not an engineer, and having only a layman's knowledge of surveying and construction, he supervised the building of many bridges for the Chilean government, became interested in railroading, and presently moved on to Peru to direct the building of her lines. His first job was the Southern Railway—from the Pacific up to Lake Titicaca and Cuzco—and he took it in stride. Next came the Central, and in its building Meiggs had full opportunity to exercise his ingenuity and tenacity. Begun in 1869, the work dragged on year after year. There were few trained engineers or mechanics in Peru. Funds were always low, and the materials of construction had to be brought from thousands of miles away. And, most formidable obstacle of all, there were the Andes themselves—a vast continental barrier rising twenty thousand feet above sea level, blocking the line of track at every turn with precipice and gorge, hurling down avalanches and floods upon the work already completed.

"You'll never lay the tracks through those mountains," they told him.

"All right, then," was his now famous answer, "we'll hang 'em up on balloons."

Balloons, as it turned out, were about the only device known to man that he *didn't* have to employ in the building of his road; but slowly the line crawled up and on, and by the time of Meiggs's death, in 1877, it had crossed the continental divide at the unheard-of altitude of 15,665 feet—higher than Mont Blanc, higher than any mountain peak in the United States, and still, in 1937, the highest standard-gauge railway in the world. It was not until 1893, twenty-four years after its inception, that the road was carried through to Oroya and finally thrown open to traffic. But the worst of the obstacles had been conquered during Meiggs's lifetime and by Meiggs's genius. The snow-capped, granite mountain through which the track tunnels at its highest point has been named Mt. Meiggs by the Peruvian government as a memorial to his achievement. But the Central Railroad of Peru is a better one.

The daily train from Lima to Oroya leaves Desamparados Station at 8.05 in the morning and reaches its destination at 4.30 in the afternoon. Sounds like a long trip? Better take a magazine? I give you my personal guaranty you won't get past the table of contents.

For the first hour the going is comparatively safe and sane. Leaving the city behind, the train skirts the eastern flank of Cerro San Cristobal and follows the valley of the River Rimac through wide, irrigated fields of sugar and cotton. The new government-owned tobacco factory slips past; then Grace's Vitarte cotton mills. (Beware Vitarte, O *turista*, for there, with the most modern American machines, are manufactured most of the fabrics which you will buy from *cholo* women in Huancayo or Ayacucho as products of the native Indian crafts.) A few more factories, haciendas, fields—then brown hills come up on either side; at first low, isolated humps along the valley, presently connected by ridges, coalescing, climbing. The green fields beside the river narrow to a ribbon of half a mile in width. Outside the car window the earth still looks flat, but up ahead the loco-

motive—squat, pot-bellied, brass-banded—has begun to labor. A new ridge of bare, brown earth springs up on the left, just in time to shut off a view of Cajamarquilla in its dusty valley. Then its twin appears on the right, and gradually the two converge, pressing fields and railroad even closer to the river. Suddenly you find yourself leaning out the window to see their summits. Then the train stops, gurgles, pants, and you are in Chosica.

Of Chosica more anon. Beyond it, Andes and Central Railroad stop teasing each other and come to grips in earnest. The hills on either side are no longer hills, but mountains; their faces are no longer earth, but rock. Ahead is a vast granite wall, apparently shutting off all farther progress; but the train twists, dodges, maneuvers and is somehow past it, only to enter another valley and encounter another wall. On the thin green strip beside the tracks, cane and cotton fields have given way to orchards. At San Bartolomae, the next station, *cholo* women in their white panamas and gay Vitarte skirts besiege the train with *limones*, *citrones*, *mansanas*. The locomotive growls, clangs, toots (the Central's engines are probably the most voluble in the world), and the enclosing granite walls hurl back the sound. After San Bartolomae, they close in tight, and the train goes off on the first of innumerable switchbacks up their precipitous sides, as if literally squeezed upward by pressure from below. For fifteen minutes now there is nothing but the river, the track and rock walls, with perhaps a strip of distant sky overhead if you can lean far enough out of the window to see it. Then momentarily the pressure relaxes and spits the train out into the valley of Surco.

At Surco there are more Indian women, only these carry flowers for sale instead of fruits—enormous bouquets of pansies and violets from the mountain meadows round about, still dripping with their natural moisture. Buy them by all means—they are beautiful and last for days—but be sure to put them on the rack above your neighbor's head and not your own. Otherwise you will enjoy a private shower-bath all the way to Oroya.

Matucana—lunch and beggars. Tamboraque—old Spanish gold-

diggings. San Mateo—llamas beside the track, noses high, lower lips protruding, a dozen Mussolinis in high disdain contemplating us Abyssinians in the coach. Rio Blanco—Chicla—Casapalca—Ticlio.

From Surco to Matucana the precipitous mountain slopes are zigzagged with stonewalled terraces—relics of the Inca's strenuous agriculture. Modern economy has made them no longer practicable; it is many years since maize has grown on these tiny level steps, and their one-time fertile greenness has long since faded to mountain-brown. But their outlines, carved in earth and granite, remain distinct—a vast, bewildering pattern of platforms rising from the valley floor to the very summits of the peaks.

Beyond Matucana, however, even the Incas were licked. The terraces disappear as slopes bristle into precipices, and on their sheer crags even the ubiquitous Andean cactus can rarely claw out a hold. All vegetation dies; the stream of the Rimac has dwindled to a thin, hissing thread; the mountains have shed the last friendly mask of life and stand out bare in savage desolation. The train seems to shake itself as it climbs among them, engine panting, whistle tooting. The track wrestles with the earth rather than passes over it. It is no longer a path of steel and wood, but a living thing, cunning and untiring, in combat with a gigantic living opponent. Cautiously it advances up a gorge, seeking a way through at the farther end. The mountains throw a precipice in its path, and quickly it scuttles backward up the gorge's side. A moment's rest, a gathering of strength, then forward it goes again along the selfsame gorge, but five hundred feet higher than on its previous try. A huge granite shoulder springs out to block it; it pierces it, howls through the inner darkness of the mountain, emerges on the other side, only to be confronted by a thousand foot abyss directly in its path. It bridges it. Steel roars on steel, slender in hanging space, and the rock roars back its echo. From the coach window is seen momentarily a vertical, scrambled world—without planes, without poles, with only height and depth. Then, as suddenly as it appeared, it is blotted out as the next mountain rushes in and the train burrows again

into darkness. As soon as one gorge is conquered, there is another—higher, deeper. New cliffs rise up to overwhelm the intruder, fall away to engulf it. Again the switchbacks, tunnels, bridges.

For upwards of three hours this amazing battle goes on. Time and again the mountains seem to have the train so hermetically pocketed that there is no further progress possible. But each time the train miraculously finds a way, or, if there is no way to be found, makes it. All told there are sixty-seven bridges, fifteen switchbacks and sixty-five tunnels on the ascent. Leaving Rio Blanco, the little mountain town beside the tracks remains in full view for a half-hour, while the train zigzags laboriously up the mountain walls that hem it in. Looking down on it for the last time, just before the final ridge blots it out, the passenger can count five parallel lines of track, one above the other, over which he has successively passed in his ascent. At *Infernillo* Bridge (*infernillo* means "little hell," and is accurate except for the "little") the train plunges out of a tunnel, spans an abyss so deep that it is in twilight even at noon, and burrows again into darkness on the other side. The most accurate impression I can convey of the unreal, appalling scene is one compounded, in jumbled, supernatural fashion, of equal parts of Dante, a welsh-rarebit nightmare and the Dragon's Gorge at Coney Island. I should not have been in the least surprised if a scarlet hobgoblin had suddenly appeared in the window and pulled my nose.

All things must have an end—even, though you are inclined to doubt it at the time, the Central Railroad of Peru. The train has finally attained an altitude of over fifteen thousand feet; six hours have passed since leaving Lima, and you have thoroughly forgotten that the world once contained such phenomena as a level plane or a straight line. The track squirms through its hundredth canyon, by its hundredth precipice, through its hundredth shoulder. Then again it reaches the ridge, and suddenly, incredulously, you discover it is the last ridge. Ahead, instead of another gorge, there stretches to the horizon the forlorn expanse of the mountains' summit plateau—the *puno*, or *altiplano*, of the Central Andes. The train still climbs but at an easier grade; the rolling

earth is covered with moss and sparse, tough grass; to right and left are the snow-capped peaks of the continental divide, but between them the valleys are broad and undulant. Two lakes appear ahead, twin sheets of living color in a world of brown and gray. Though separated by less than ten feet of earth, one lake gives back in pure reflection the thin, clean blueness of the sky, whereas the other, heavy with mineral deposits, is dull copper-red. Beyond them bulks Mt. Meiggs—top of the world. There is snow on its saw-toothed summit and in the snow a cross. The locomotive whistles triumphantly—its blast no longer hurled back upon it by enclosing walls, but free in the thin, clear air—and plunges into the mountain's granite base. For a few moments in the sooty darkness, you can feel the engine straining, the train still climbing. Then, strangely, up ahead there is silence. The engine is no longer laboring. The coupling-blocks between the cars are rattling freely. Halfway through the Galera Tunnel, in the black innards of Mt. Meiggs, the line has reached its highest point—15,665 feet above the sea—and when it emerges again into daylight, it is on its way down the eastern slopes of the Andes.

From the summit to Oroya the train descends some 3500 feet, but it takes them leisurely and without struggle. All around, the lofty snow peaks bite into the horizon. Their lower slopes, however, are gentle and clothed in the pale, grudging green of mountain vegetation, for we have at last passed out of the world where rain never falls. Where, before, the earth was heavy brown, it is now gray with limestone; the high shoulders of the cliffs above glisten with rain-washed smoothness; and the sky has turned from empty gray to rich, cloud-hung blue. Then presently the blue ahead darkens. Its white clouds are heavy with soot. Suddenly the stern outline of a tall chimney cuts the skyline. The mining town of Oroya slides up on either side, and the odyssey is over.

We shall get back to Oroya in due time, but for the moment our journey—and the Central Railroad's—is done. Before turning about, however, and scooting back to Chosica on the wings of

literary license, it is only fair to record that in return for its scenic splendor and thrills, the journey often charges full price. For every person who swears by the trip as the greatest experience in the world, there is one who swears he would rather cross the Atlantic in a canoe. When you board your coach at Desamparados in Lima, your chances are about fifty-fifty that you are about to spend (a) the most enjoyable or (b) the most miserable day of your South American junket. The nigger in the Andean woodpile is *soroche*.

*Soroche* is mountain-sickness, Peruvian variety, and we began hearing about it aboard the *Santa Rita* before Sandy Hook was well out of sight. It is the worst affliction in the world, they assured us. Your blood-pressure doubles, your head splits open, your last five meals come up, your ears and nose bleed and your eyes pop, your heart forces its way out between your sixth and seventh ribs and you wish you were dead. Finally, if you are lucky, you *do* die, or at least pass out and spend the trip in enforced, but fairly comfortable, unconsciousness.

One expects exaggeration in shipboard stories, but in point of fact *soroche* can affect the human body in weird and woeful fashion. On my four trips up and down "the hill," I have seen people suffering from one or another of all the ailments chronicled above, except actually dying, and on rare occasions undergoing practically all of them simultaneously. The effects of altitude, like the income-tax adjuster, operate mysteriously and usually strike when least expected. Some are hit going up, some going down, some both ways, and some escape altogether. There is no rhyme or reason about it. A *turista* who has never in his life been higher than the observation platform of the Empire State Building will come through unscathed, while in the next seat a native sierra Indian will bleed profusely from nose and ears, give up his lunch and eventually pass out cold. On one trip up there was a Peruvian woman with her three children in the same car with me; at 15,000 feet, the mother was unconscious and the children were munching sandwiches and playing hide-and-seek in the aisle. Another time—this was a descent—all the

children in the car were taken violently sick, whereas none of the adults seemed to be affected at all. The only rule that seems at all applicable is the old prize-fight saw—the bigger they come, the harder they fall. On paper, at least, it sounds reasonable. The heftier a man is, the greater his lung-capacity; the greater his lung-capacity, the more oxygen he needs to fill them; the less oxygen he gets, the more poorly his body functions. Q.E.D. This theory, at least, piled up substantial evidence not long ago during the visit to Peru of an American warship. During their shore leave, more than a hundred gobs—presumably husky specimens of young American manhood—were taken for an excursion on the Central to Rio Blanco. They left the up-bound train in fine fettle, but half an hour later, when the descending train pulled in to pick them up, there were less than twenty of them still conscious. It was the greatest mass-catastrophe in the annals of *soroche* and the U. S. Navy.

We ourselves, in our Andean ups and downs, were Fortune's favored children. In their only ascent—to Rio Blanco, in the Navy's footsteps—Ruth and Edna both felt poorly when leaving Desamparados, and it looked like a day of spirits of ammonia and unmitigated woe. But the higher the train climbed, the better they felt, until at 11,000 feet they were in top spirits and devouring a multi-course Peruvian lunch. For myself, the only discomfort I experienced in the mountains was at the end of an auto-trip down from Oroya to Chosica. When I stepped from the car my ears were singing loudly and my head was spinning; but after an hour's rest both symptoms were gone, and that was the end of it. The Andes—for me, at least—proved a far easier barrier to hurdle than, say, New Year's Eve at the Country Club.

The week-end over, Jerry returned to the long ledgers of Casa Grace, and I was left on the terrace of the *Quinta Morris*, with Chosica below me, the Andes above me, and three thousand miles of beckoning South America stretched out before me to the east.

First, as to Chosica.

It is an attractive village of some thousand inhabitants, thirty-five miles up the Rimac from Lima, at an altitude of 2800 feet. In winter (July and August in Peru), when the winds blow in from the Pacific and Lima oozes fog, it is a popular vacation resort, but at the time of my visit it was quiet and almost deserted. The valley in which it is situated is perhaps half a mile wide. Below, to the west, it opens up rapidly into the coastal plain; immediately to the east it narrows and climbs abruptly, as the Andes begin to grow and overpower it. Situated almost exactly at the point where the foothills may be said to become mountains, Chosica's enclosing ridges are perhaps two thousand feet above its streets; farther back are peaks which look to be about twice as high; and at the head of the valley, seeming to close it tight as one comes up from below, is a still larger, pyramidal mountain that rears to some ten thousand feet above the sea. It looked like good climbing.

Now, as to the *Quinta Morris*.

*Quinta* means pension, and *Morris* means the name of the lady who runs it, and it was not at all by accident, but by long and deliberate plan, that I found myself there. It began back in the Manhattan Matto Grosso of Reading Up and Making Contacts. I had been referred to Mr. George O'Rourke, at Thomas Cook & Son, as the man in New York who knew most about the territory I vaguely proposed to cover in my trip—eastern Peru and the valley of the Amazon. Most travel agents are affable, but Mr. O'Rourke was also honest. He knew nothing whatever of eastern Peru or the Amazon, he assured me, but he knew someone who did. She was Mrs. Hope Morris, an American widow who operates a pension in Chosica, Peru. And there I was, and she did.

Hope Morris's has been an unusual and interesting life. Born in a small town in Virginia, she married a Standard Oil engineer when she was twenty and almost immediately thereafter sailed with him for South America, where he had been dispatched by his company to survey and investigate new oil lands. During the

next ten years their travels took them into the wildest and most inaccessible parts of the continent—along the Amazon and Madeira rivers and their tributaries; across the Gran Chaco of eastern Bolivia, which Julian Duguid traversed several years later and wrote about in "Green Hell"; and no less than three times up and down the Pichis Trail and Ucayali River, which join the Peruvian Andes with the Amazon and on which this fugitive from Times Square had set his eye and heart. Most of the gringos in Lima had not even heard of the places she had been to—much less been there. Many of the regions through which she not only passed, but in which she lived for months (such as the Gran Chaco), have subsequently been made the locale for sensational "exploration" stories. Pick at random almost any spot on the blank, green map of South America's tropic interior, and Hope Morris will probably have lived there at one time. I hope that in the ensuing record of my excursion down the Pichis Trail and the tributaries of the Amazon—when stupendous adventures befall me and the temptation waxes strong to picture myself as a cross between Marco Polo and Tarzan the Untamed—I shall have the good grace to recall that, some ten years before me, an American girl in her twenties made the selfsame trip, not once, but three times, came out very much alive, and miraculously refrained from writing even a *Sunday Times Magazine* Section article about her experiences.

In the late 1920's Mrs. Morris's husband left Standard Oil and formed his own small company. It fared badly, and soon he and his wife were back in the States, broke and at scratch. Soon after that he died. Having to support herself, she got a job at Macy's, worked there a year, and was pretty unhappy about it. She had lived almost all her adult life in South America; her friends were there and her interests were there. She wanted to go back and, after a year, she did.

In Arequipa, Peru, there has lived longer than anyone can remember a person—half-woman and half-institution—called *Tia Bates*. She was once an American, they say, and she is reported once to have had a husband—an engineer, or prospector, or

something. But he is lost in the dark fog of time, and not even the oldest west coast gringo can recollect Arequipa in the days before *Tia* Bates, as a widow, opened her *quinta* there. In the past twenty years every American or English visitor to the city has eaten and slept at the *Quinta Bates*—the Duke of Windsor, when he was Prince of Wales, President-elect Hoover, General Pershing, Noel Coward, visiting diplomats, *turista* and beach-combers. If they are solvent they pay. If they aren't they are on the cuff, provided the old lady likes them. But then, if she doesn't like them, she doesn't take them in in the first place—solvent or otherwise.

It was to the *Quinta Bates* that Mrs. Morris went when she returned to Peru, as housekeeper and general assistant, and it was from *Tia*, she says, that she learned (a) how to run a pension and (b) how to swear. After two years, at all events, she apparently was adept enough at both arts to shift for herself. In 1930 she opened a house in the outskirts of Lima and in 1933 another in Chosica. By now, at forty-odd, she is fair on the way to becoming an institution herself. She considers Peru her permanent home, has not been to the United States in seven years and has no intention of ever returning here permanently. Her friends, she argues, are there, as well as her livelihood. In New York she would probably have to go back to Macy's, but in Lima she is comparatively wealthy. She writes regularly once a month to her mother in Warrenton, Virginia, speaks Spanish as if she had been in Peru two weeks, and claims to be a distant cousin of the Duchess of Windsor, but doesn't hammer the point.

"Is it true what they say about Dixie?" inquired Chosica's municipal loudspeaker every morning at nine, and thereupon settled down to a day of broadcasting old phonograph records. Phonograph and loudspeaker were located in the village plaza, and both were good and rusty, and good and loud. They seemed, however, to be Chosica's pride and joy, and a policeman was stationed in the plaza apparently for the sole purpose of making the music go 'round. Every hour or so the church bells rang—

they too were good and rusty, and good and loud—and when they and “Dixie” got together, even the stolid Andes quivered along their rugged spines.

Otherwise Chosica was a pleasant place—for loafing, for writing, for tramping the hills, for chewing the contemplative cud. Once I had learned to step over, instead of into, the *asequis* (the stone irrigation ditches which line every street), walking was a delight, either through the tree-shaded town itself, or up the valley to where the mountains begin to bristle, or down the valley to the neighboring village of—believe it or not—Moron. There were a hundred dogs to every human inhabitant, but even the oldest resident did not recall having ever seen one of a recognizable breed. They were all loose, all ferocious-looking, and all barked at you as you passed; but they didn’t bite, apparently, unless you bit them first. Soon after my arrival I took to walking out with Mrs. Morris’s bitch-dog. Her name was Sally, her disposition gentle and charming, her coat black and white, her ancestry unmentionable. The household called her a “point-setter.” She was good company and acted as a fine decoy for the other dogs, who lavished their attention on her instead of on me.

There was horseback riding in Chosica. It seemed a fine way to spend a morning, but was not as easy as it sounded. As in most Peruvian ventures, there were *negociaciones* to be made first.

Mrs. Morris knew of a hacienda a few miles up the valley where they had horses to hire, but a half-hour’s amicable chat with Chosica’s switchboard operator finally disclosed the fact that the hacienda had no phone. We walked down to the Hotel Estacion, by the railroad tracks, to make inquiries.

“Sí, señor. Sí, señora—horses there are at the hacienda.”

“Is there any way we can get word there that we want three horses for tomorrow?”

“Alas, no, señora—no one ever goes up there from here, and the owner never comes down.”

"No one ever goes there?"

"No, *señora*—only Roberto. He goes there every night."

Roberto, it developed, was the proprietor of the general store down the block. Arriving there, we found a China-boy behind the counter and a customer at a table drinking beer through a mustache; but no Roberto. The China-boy said he didn't know where he was.

"Haven't you any idea?"

"Sí, *señora*—he is in his house across the street."

"We want him to get us three horses for tomorrow from the hacienda."

The China-boy wasn't interested, but the customer with the mustache and the beer raised his head.

"They have good horses at the hacienda," he said.

We crossed the street, knocked at a doorway and waited. The inevitable dog barked at us, but no one came. We returned to the store, and as we entered, a fat, old Chinaman appeared from the back-room. He was yawning and looked sleepy.

"We are looking for Señor Roberto," Mrs. Morris ventured.

"Sí, *señora*—I am Roberto." Neither the China-boy nor the mustachioed beer-drinker batted an eye.

"We understand you go to the hacienda every night. Could you tell the owner we want three horses for tomorrow?"

"Sí, *señor*—I always go there at night. But I cannot tell him about the horses."

"Why not?"

"I would forget," he said.

"*Como?*"

He smiled ingratiatingly, but shook his head. "I always forget."

Ten minutes of argument were of no avail. He knew he would forget, and nothing could shake him. Beaten, we were about to leave, when a new customer entered the store. Seeing the man with the mustache drinking beer, he greeted him effusively.

"Ha, Julio!" he cried. "And how are things at the hacienda?"

The mustached one grunted something. We looked at Roberto.

"Did he say hacienda?"

"Sí, *señora*—Señor Julio there, with the beer, he owns the hacienda. To him, perhaps, you might speak about the horses."

Strange to relate, we *did* go riding—along the foaming Rimac stream; then off up the Santa Eulalia Valley between narrowing, steepening walls. Great dust clouds rose from our horses' feet, but on either side of the twisting road the irrigated fields were fresh and green. We passed trees heavy with *paltas* and mango fruit, rich patches of cotton, cane and maize, and thick clumps of the castor-oil plant, plain enough in appearance until you knew what they were, whereupon they assumed a sinister aspect. A little up the slopes were grazing lands dotted with cattle, sheep and goats; then abruptly the earth's green vanished into the brown sterility of the mountains, and we were conscious of the thinness and tenuousness of the little winding Eden through which we rode. Our horses (their size and their ears were suspiciously mulish, but I shall give them the benefit of the doubt) had in their repertory a walk, a canter and a copyright gait of their own that was halfway between a legitimate trot and an Argentine tango. But, of the three, they vastly preferred the walk, and, except for occasional short-lived spurts, our progress up and down the Santa Eulalia was a deliberate and stately affair.

It was Sunday the day we rode out, and the road was filled with *cholos*, coming and going from church, or maybe just coming and going. The pure-blooded, or nearly pure-blooded, Peruvian Indians have definite and seldom varying racial characteristics, and for a gringo they are almost as hard to distinguish one from another as, say, a group of Chinese coolies. They are all short, stocky, square-headed and square-featured and they all dress alike—the men in denim pants, store shirts and faded, woven ponchos, the women in shirtwaists, voluminous colored skirts (usually red), and wide-brimmed panama hats. Of the two sexes, the women are by far the more prepossessing—especially when they are still young and time has not yet drained away the red-brown glow of their skin and the rich, black luster of their eyes. As among most primitive people, they, rather than the men,

carry the loads when there are loads to be carried, and each one whose hands are free carries a small spindle and ball of wool and knits as she walks along. Usually she has a bundle on her back. Sometimes it contains provisions; more often a baby, swaying and bobbing as she walks, staring at the passing world with solemn, patent-leather eyes.

With few exceptions, the Peruvian *cholo* is fabulously poor. He dwells in a hut of mud and bamboo, eats rice, corn and black bread, earns perhaps the equivalent of two or three dollars weekly. But the poverty of the Andean Indian is vastly different from that of his cousin in Lima. Although he has no more, even fewer, material possessions, he is living in a society in which most such possessions are not essential—indeed, are scarcely even known. His poorness is not of the grinding, degrading sort. It is absolute, not relative—a result, it seems, of the economics of nature rather than the economics of man. He is not the pauper before the gates of the rich man, but the man who has little because the world he inhabits has little to give.

Nor has the average *cholo* either great desire or great opportunity to better his state. The tradition of serfdom is heavy upon him. Long before the formation of the Peruvian Republic, long even before the Spaniards came to the New World, when the dynasty of Incas ruled the Andes, he was the peon, the fetcher and carrier, the one of many who was ruled by the few. Prescott, in the "Conquest of Peru," ascribes the almost fantastic ease with which Pizarro overthrew the Incas principally to the weaknesses in the Incaic form of government—under their benevolent, but ironclad, autocracy, power was completely centralized, the masses of the people were given little opportunity to exercise their own discretion or initiative, and once their leaders were overthrown they were demoralized and helpless. In psychology, as in condition of living, they were serfs long before the white man came with his own particular brands of political and economic slavery; and serfs they have remained, unchanging and unchanged, while the rulers, the governments and the revolutions of five centuries have come and gone about them.

What APRA, or communism, or whatever form of government the future holds in store for Peru will do for the *cholos* it is impossible to say. Anything at all resembling true democracy is far off in a nation in which only a fraction of the population is literate or generally informed. Communism has both the problem of the Church to contend with, as it has in all Latin countries, and the far more serious and deep-rooted obstacle of Peruvian family solidarity. The Peruvian Indian is a man of many brothers, sisters, cousins, uncles, aunts. Socially and economically they comprise the permanent foundation of his life, far more than either Church or State, and any new social order which would embrace him must take this situation into consideration. This, and his ignorance, and his long centuries in the tradition of slavery. "Arise, ye prisoners of starvation!" cries the Internationale. But before a man can arise he must know how to stand and walk.

In the evenings we sat out on the terrace of the *Quinta Morris*, our feet on the stone wall that enclosed the swimming pool below, our eyes on the towering Andes behind Chosica as they reddened softly in the fading sun. Light plays games of its own in the mountains and valleys. Now it was dark where we sat, but the ridges three thousand feet above were still bright with sunlight; now the ridges too had darkened and night has fallen on Chosica, but in the next valley to the west, which opened straight and wide to the Pacific, the sun was not yet below the horizon, and it was still day. All week it had rained farther up in the mountains in the late afternoon, but never here. We sat in cloudless sunlight, watching the long sheets of rain in the east and hearing the distant thunder ricochet from peak to peak. In its tight little valley Chosica was a tight little world. What happened in the next valley or beyond the nearest ridge did not greatly affect us—were it weather, or politics or the fluctuations of the *sol*.

It was the rarest of luxuries to live in a world without newspapers, without radios—not to know how many bombs had just

fallen on Madrid, or that last night's Broadway opening was the worst failure of the season since "Stork Mad," or what Mrs. Roosevelt had for lunch. True, Lima with its ships and planes and telephones was only thirty-five miles away, and *El Comercio* arrived in Chosica each morning with the sun. But there was nothing peremptory in their availability; they did not force themselves upon you, bully you, regulate your life. For a full week I did not handle money, use a telephone, ride in a mechanical conveyance, or write a letter.

If the mountains shut out the world they also shut us in and made of our little community of the *quinta* a compact, ingrown group. In "season," which is Lima's winter, Mrs. Morris has many Peruvian guests; at the time of my visit, however, we were all gringos—some English, some American, some weirdly involved mixtures of Nordic and Latin. Pre-eminent among the mixtures was a family named Harrington. Max Harrington was British, but had lived in South America for ten years, working as an accountant for Milne and Company. His wife had been born in Iquique, Chile, of a German father and a Chilean mother. Their three children, aged five to eight, were indefinable—according to English law they were English; according to Chilean law they were Chilean, having been born there; and according to Peruvian law, Chosica being their permanent home, they were Peruvian. Their parents invariably spoke English, but they, brought up by native nurses, knew only Spanish. Esperanto would seem to be the family's only hope. Another linguistically scrambled family, though without benefit of offspring, were the Fishers. Jack Fisher, who was in South America with International Petroleum, was English and spoke practically no French; his wife was French and spoke practically no English. They compromised on very bad Spanish while taking Berlitz courses in each other's languages.

Racially unscrambled, but of interest among the *quinta's* habitués, was Bryan Fawcett, son of the well-known Colonel Fawcett who disappeared into Brazil's Matto Grosso some ten years ago and has never been heard of since. The younger Fawcett lives in Lima permanently, working as a commercial artist. Even



CHOSICA AND THE RIMAC VALLEY



A MOUNTAINEER AND A LADY



today, he said, he is approached regularly by individuals or groups who want him to lead—or, better, finance—expeditions in search of his father. But he is convinced his father is dead and turns them all down.

Others of Mrs. Morris's brood included the wife of a Grace Line executive, a young Virginian from the Cerro de Pasco Copper Company, and two English engineers employed by the Central Railroad, who were currently engaged in the construction of a bridge at Verrugas, about twenty miles up the line. In addition to these, stray transients occasionally came and went, and for days before each scheduled arrival the *quinta* was agog. Would he (invariably it was a "he") be handsome, charming, amusing? Or fat and feeble-minded? Which room should he have? With whom should he sit at table? How was his ping-pong game? Trivial, ridiculous excitement, yet natural and understandable in view of the smallness of the community, the interdependence of its members and the isolation of their lives. Each new visitor's appearance was awaited with as much breathless expectation as if he were a solar eclipse.

I soon became quite friendly with one of the English engineers. His name was Ted Waters, he had lived in Peru for practically all his adult life, and he was the star boarder at the *quinta* both in length of service and prestige. Our titanic ping-pong struggles daily shattered the peace of the terrace, and his immense knowledge and love of gardening almost educated me to the point where I could tell a radish from a nasturtium. On one occasion he took me with him to the bridge at Verrugas. We went up the line on his private *autocarri*—a Chevrolet coupé from which the regular wheels had been removed and to which had been attached steel wheels for running on the tracks—and reached the scene of construction in about an hour. The new bridge was being built at a point where the Central pops out from one of its innumerable tunnels to span one of its innumerable gorges and was to supplant an old one, currently in use, which had developed a wayward tendency toward swaying in the breeze. Waters and the other Englishman were the only engineers on the job, aided

and abetted by a hundred-odd *cholo* laborers and a weekly delegation of brass hats from Lima who would come up for an afternoon of kibitzing. Judged by New York standards, whereby one is accustomed to see last week's vacant lot turn into next week's skyscraper, the work was progressing with fabulous slowness. Machinery and construction materials had to be brought all the way from England, usually managing to be delayed in transit; the available labor was unskilled and undependable; and the Andes themselves contributed their tithe of woe with landslides, washouts and other unco-operative tantrums. When I visited Verrugas the job had already been underway for six months, and the steel work had not even begun; only two great blocks of foundation concrete, bulking white and symmetrical in the wild disorder of the mountain gorge, presented tangible evidence of man's battle with nature that was going on here. The engineers estimated that another year would be required to complete the construction, provided the Peruvian holidays were kept down to an irreducible and rigid minimum.

At some time I must inadvertently have let slip some hint as to my dark past, for in the steel-shod Chevvy coming down from Verrugas Waters suddenly turned to me and said:

"I had a letter this morning that I think might interest you. It's from my niece."

"In London?" I inquired.

"No, New York. She's an actress. Only a kid, really, but doing damn well, I hear. Just had a bad break, though." He took a letter from his pocket and handed it to me. "Here—read it. Say—come to think of it—you might know her, mightn't you?"

I opened the letter and read:

"DEAR UNCLE TED:

"I've just had an awful disappointment. A few weeks ago I got a job in a new show—the best part I've had yet—and I felt sure I was set for a grand season. Everything went fine right up to the opening night, but then the critics just tore it to pieces,

and it ran only two and a half weeks. The name of the play was 'The Laughing Woman,' and—"

"Ever hear of the play?" asked Waters.

"Uh-huh."

"Bad break for the kid, wasn't it?"

"Uh-huh."

During the remainder of the ride down to Chosica the conversation languished. The bombs on Madrid, Brooks Atkinson and Mrs. Roosevelt's lunch no longer seemed so exquisitely remote. On either side the Andes still hemmed us in, but suddenly they were menacing, heavy with foreboding of what lay beyond. Two peaks, especially, seemed possessed of this quality: a twin-mountain high above and behind Chosica's sheltering ridges. That day, and ever since, they have held for me a strange, sinister power: high, grim, implacable against the sky. I have named them Mts. Lee and J. J. Shubert.

I have spoken of ping-pong, but I have not mentioned swimming, tennis, contract bridge, cocktails, dice. There were all of them at Chosica—far too much of them, in fact; especially the last two. They are inseparable in Peru, the cocktail being used, as elsewhere, for drinking, and the dice to determine who pays. You can tell a block away when you are approaching a bar by the rattle of dice from inside; not even the most microscopic cordial is permitted to go down the hatch without the accompanying ritual. The games played vary greatly, but all of them have a single purpose—to consume as much time as possible. That's the one thing the Peruvian, the resident gringo and the *turista* have plenty of—Time. And the Great Statistician will not, I think, be pleased if He ever computes the amount of it which clicks by daily to the rhythm of galloping ivory.

Incidentally, "cocktails," as used above, are something of a misnomer. Before meals they are called "cocktails," but they never are. They are always whisky-*con*-soda or whisky-*sin*-soda, and genuine cocktails are universally frowned upon. They are

effeminate, or unPeruvian, or perhaps the bartenders just don't know how to make them. Ambrosio, majordomo of the *Quinta Morris*, with whom I enjoyed the finest international relations, would shake his head disapprovingly when I ordered my daily ration of Martini.

A mountain, says Webster, is "an elevation of land high enough to be very conspicuous in its surroundings."

The world, I am afraid, is full of good people to whom such a definition is quite adequate. They are the ones who would rather ride than walk, who would rather be comfortable than uncomfortable, and who would consider a funicular up the Matterhorn or an airplane service to the summit of Everest admirable human achievements. In sober fact, there can be no argument with them. All the sound reasons, all the facts, are on their side. But the mountain climber has something better than reasons and facts. For him a mountain is no mere protuberance on the earth's surface. It is an itching of the feet and a lifting of the heart. It is ambition and struggle, skill and courage, labor and fulfillment. He raises his eyes and sees its peak against the sky. He climbs its steep sides and learns what his legs are for. He walks its thin ridges and learns what his lungs are for. It hurls a precipice at him—he scales it. Then a chimney—he follows it. Then a glacier—he outmaneuvers it. And when he has won his good fight he sits on a bald bleak knob in the sky, looks down at the world from which he came and the long path by which he has ascended, and finds out things no other man can know about a cheese sandwich and a canteen of water. The mountains are barren. They are tall and cold and can hurt a man. From their forlorn heights they stretch immensely to the horizon—gigantic, while he is very small and very far from home and bed. With the flick of a stone they can crush him; with the tremor of a snow patch they can annihilate him. He will find no shelter, no warmth, no comfort in their loneliness and desolation. But, if he is lucky, he may find himself.

The Andes round about Chosica, through which I tramped,

were by no means formidable specimens—mere foothills compared to the snow-capped peaks of the high sierra to the east. The tallest of them was perhaps seven thousand feet above the village, or about ten thousand above sea level, and any of them within range of sight could be reached by a day's steady climbing. No inaccessible pinnacles, these. No virgin summits or wild perils. But on their modest scale they were good, sound mountains, none the less. They had sweep and dignity, hazard and surprise. They seldom presented an insurmountable obstacle, but they always provided a hard day's work. They tired the body and refreshed the spirit.

There are two ways to climb mountains—with and without objective. Pursuing the first method, you pick your peak and go after it, following as nearly as possible the most direct line to its summit. Adopting the second, you proceed where inclination leads you, and your exertions and maneuvers are not the means to an end, but an end in themselves. The first day out from Chosica, I employed Method No. 2—to reconnoiter and become acquainted. The path I followed zigzagged up a sixty-degree slope north of the town to a ridge about 1500 feet above the valley. Every Andean town has its guardian cross somewhere on the encircling hills, and here was Chosica's—a huge, wooden crucifix set on a stone base and loaded down, in Latin-Catholic fashion, with all manner of symbolic trimmings. Nailed or tied to it in such profusion that they almost obliterated its form were several yards of white sheeting, stalks of dried maize, a crown of thorns, a miniature ladder, an enormous pair of pliers, an old straw hat and a weathercock. But strangest of all in their incongruity, though most obvious in their symbolism, were four flat squares of whitened wood nailed in pairs to the upright and painted in the facsimile of dice. One pair showed "seven," the other "eleven."

Ascending to the cross I had my first lesson in the subject of Andean distances. In the *quinta* the day before I had estimated it would take me about fifteen minutes to reach it; actually it took three-quarters of an hour. During subsequent climbs I in-

variably made similar miscalculations—persistently underestimating distance and time—until I arrived at the method of making my own guess and then doubling or tripling it to arrive at the correct figure. Accustomed to the compact masses of such mountains as the Swiss Alps or, on a smaller scale, our own White Mountains in New Hampshire, my eye required much practice before it could adjust itself to the far greater distances of these sprawling Andes. I have never seen false perspective or the phenomenon of foreshortening so startlingly illustrated as in these hills. From the bottom of a slope looking up, or from the top looking down, I would time and again pick out with my eye a boulder, cactus-plant or other landmark that appeared to be situated half-way, or two-thirds of the way, to my goal, only to discover when I reached it that I had completed only a quarter, or less, of my climb. This foreshortening is caused partly, of course, by an unpracticed eye; but much of it, I believe, is created by the nature of the mountains themselves. If the Andes are vast in size, they are immeasurable in monotony. On their western slopes there is no rain, therefore no streams, no trees, no snow, no life. Unbroken by variety of color or shape their great brown flanks lean into the distance like so many miles of veined and scarified sandpaper. Here and there a cactus clings to its patch of earth; occasionally a boulder stands out larger or differently shaped than its neighbors. But there is no real variety—no sudden, vivid transitions from forest to rock, from earth to snow, from green to blue to brown to white, such as distinguish the uplands of the Alps—to parcel off the endless march of space. Like the desert and the sea, the Andes have no bounds but the horizon. Trigonometry can tell you the distance to the horizon, but it cannot help you to reach it.

In five full days of tramping through the Andes I never encountered a human being, but the relics of men are everywhere. First, there are the paths themselves—vast tangled networks spreading over virtually every summit and along every ridge. And along them are the ruins of old forts—rough breastworks of loose rock, built in the 1870's during the War of the Pacific, when the

Chileans captured Lima and drove the Peruvian army up into the hills. Going higher, history unrolls itself farther—in reverse sequence. Atop the group of hills immediately to the south of Chosica are the long-abandoned diggings of an early Spanish gold mine. No gear or machinery remains, but here and there beside the trail there yawns a black pit from which the *Conquistadores* once filched the treasures of the mountain. Across a deep valley, on the opposite slopes, are the relics of still earlier dwellers in the Andes—the high-piled terraces of the Incaic farmers, tiered one above the other in rocky patchwork to the very peaks themselves.

Griffis, publisher-editor-copyboy of *The West Coast Leader*, whom I had met in Lima and who probably has done more tramping in the Andes than any gringo in Peru, is convinced there are still rich gold deposits in the mountains south of Chosica.

"It's there all right," he told me. "Those old Spaniards barely scratched the surface. They hadn't the machinery to go deeper; but push a tunnel four kilometers into the base of those hills and you'll strike ore that's dripping gold. I know. I've been nosing around those hills for twenty-five years, and I know."

I inquired why nobody had bothered to make sure. Griffis shook his head sadly.

"Ever since I can remember," he said, "I've been trying to finance an outfit to go after those hills. It'd only take twenty or thirty thousand dollars, but nobody'll go for it; they all say it's too near home."

I asked what he meant.

"Well, you know how it is with gold, or anything precious and rare. You generally figure you have to trek halfway across the earth to get it. Like to California in the old days, or the Klondike, or Rhodesia. Here in Peru now it's the Marañón—way the hell up there in the bunghole of nowhere, where a million little streams start turning into the Amazon and there isn't a road or a steamboat in a thousand miles. There's a new company being formed pretty near every damn week to mine for gold up

there. But Chosica? No, sir! There couldn't be any gold there, one mile from the railroad tracks, thirty-five miles from Lima. That's what they say, and I've tried twenty years to convince 'em."

He shrugged discouragedly.

The wealth of human relics and human history which this section of the Andes holds only serves to accentuate its present loneliness and desolation. The gold mines, long abandoned; the fortifications, crumbled and in ruins; the Inca terraces, sterile and uncultivated for four hundred years, lie untouched and unremembered. No life stirs within them; no traveler passes them by. Even plant and animal life shun these rainless, streamless heights. Dry clumps of maguey cactus, a snail clinging to a rock, a sudden scuttling lizard, no bigger than a mouse—that is all. High in the thin air a condor circles, peering, sees nothing in the way of provender, and flies away. Perhaps in some remote future these mountains will again be green with irrigated crops, or bristling with cannon of another war, or swarming with seekers after Griffis' gold. But today—only a few thousand feet above the busy valley of the Rimac and the embattled Central railroad—they seem as desolate and remote from men as the snow caps of Antarctica.

I was not long in finding an enthusiastic fellow-climber among the menage at the *quinta*—Sally, the "pointsetter"—bitch. A model of tropical indolence when in her usual lowland haunts, she would undergo a startling metamorphosis as soon as she felt mountain rock beneath her paws and smelled mountain air in her nose. Up went tail and pointed ears. Her legs took on spring and her body power. The blood of her questionable ancestors seemed to stir with fresh life in answer to the challenge of obstacle and hazard. The second day I went climbing she trotted out after me, without invitation, and thenceforth she never missed an expedition. However exhausted she was at the end of a stiff day—though her tongue was dragging the ground like a fifth leg and I would have to spend half the evening extracting cactus spines from her ragged paws—she was always ready for more the following morn-

ing. And she was the best possible climbing-companion. She liked a sporting chance but would have none of unnecessary dangers. She knew her capabilities and limitations with unfailing instinct—which rocks she could climb and which she could not, which gullies she could leap and which she must circumvent—and she never once miscalculated a height or a distance. She could smell out an ill-marked trail with her nose better than I could locate it with my eyes. She was patient in difficulty, resourceful in emergency. She didn't indulge in small talk and she didn't borrow cigarettes. I'm afraid I fell a little in love with her.

Twice during our outings she got into trouble, but neither time through any real culpability of her own. The first occasion was at the site of the old Spanish gold diggings. Our route passed the opening of a deep mine shaft, and Sally, with a true explorer's instinct, decided to investigate. Her reconnoitering carried her down the sloping edge of the pit to a point where the shaft fell away perpendicularly into the depths of the mountain. She stopped and tried to get back to safety, but found that she was unable to turn herself around on the loose earth of the steep slope. A slip would have meant annihilation, and unfortunately dogs are so constructed that they cannot climb uphill backwards. The earth she had loosened in her descent was rapidly slipping out from under her feet into the shaft, and the situation called for emergency measures. Fortunately she was not of that fashionable class of canines whose tails are clipped; hers was waving above her, erect and agitated. I lay flat on the ground beside the pit, reached down and lifted her out by it.

The second misadventure involved me as well as Sally. We were performing a horizontal traverse of a steep scree slope high on the side of a mountain—I in the lead, Sally following. The path was very faint and tilted off precariously with the slope of the earth; the footing was so insecure that, as I advanced, I had been pressing my body close against the slope above me and clinging with my hands to whatever support it offered. Presently the path before me disappeared altogether—a false trail obliterated it in the mountain side. It was obviously impossible to continue;

the feet could not have held a grip on the loose debris of the sixty-degree slope, and in no time we would have been sliding toward the valley some two thousand feet below. There was nothing for it but to turn around, retrace our steps to the last ridge, and search for a better route. This was easy enough for me, but when it came to Sally we were confronted with a major problem. The architecture of dogs is on horizontal rather than vertical lines, and Sally was no midget of her species.

It was immediately apparent that she could not turn herself about on the sloping four-inch path without precipitating herself off into the valley. Nor could I get past her, or over or around her, without leaving the path and inviting almost certain disaster for myself. It was a rather bad moment. Sally knew what was required, but after a cramped, hazardous effort at turning, realized she couldn't do it. I was faced with the alternatives of staying where I was indefinitely, leaving the path for the steep, slippery slope, or unblocking the return route by pushing Sally off the mountain. None of these appealed to me greatly, and for perhaps ten minutes dog and I stood motionless looking at each other, while loose earth slipped away beneath our feet and the two thousand feet to the valley below seemed to stretch itself to two miles.

Finally an idea came. Digging in my feet as securely as I could and bracing myself back against the slope above me, I leaned over and grasped the scruff of Sally's neck with one hand and her ever-handly tail with the other. Whether or not she understood what I was trying to do I don't know, but the animal was magnificent. She did not struggle—not even a muscle twitched—as by tail and neck I lifted her an inch off the path, swung her around over a two-thousand-foot drop and set her down facing in the opposite direction. Within two minutes she had led the way back to the nearest ridge and safety.

This incident ended our mountain misadventures, but our biggest Andean junket was still to come. A few miles north of Chosica the Rimac Valley splits in two. River and railroad follow the right fork; the left forms the fertile Santa Eulalia Valley

through which one day we had ridden our horses. At the apex, splitting the two, is a fine, solitary peak which dominates Chosica and the countryside around for many miles. It is no giant, certainly, as Andes go—I doubt if it exceeds ten thousand feet—but its commanding and isolated position gave it real magnificence, and an inspection from the *quinta* through my field-glasses promised some first-class rock climbing. It was to be my only fling while in the Andes at the aforementioned No. 1 method of climbing—with a set objective—and I was in a fine mountaineering glow of anticipation.

I set out for it at seven-thirty in the morning, with Sally at my heels, and was scarcely out of Chosica when I discovered I had badly miscalculated the distance to the base of the mountain. What I had estimated to be three miles rapidly grew into six, and by the time we reached the first scree slopes Sally's tongue was already perilously near the ground and my knapsack was gaining weight at what seemed a pound a minute. We also had the misfortune of having chosen a brilliantly sunny day for our foray, and a brilliant sun in the Andes is no joke. Its heat—although mitigated for a while by the fresh mountain air—is tropical with a vengeance, and there is no shade or shelter from it anywhere on the hills. In the temperate zone, where the sun strikes slantingly upon the earth, a small rock or bush will often throw a shadow long enough to give protection to a man or dog; here, however, within a few degrees of the equator, it was almost directly overhead, and the whole ascent before us offered no tree or shrub large enough for us to crawl under. It was climb and sweat, or dig a hole in the mountain and crawl in. By mid-afternoon Sally was literally trying the second alternative.

Looking upward as we began our ascent I discovered that the mountain of our choice was not really a single mountain at all, but a series of steep hills placed one on top of another. An hour's climbing brought us to the first peak, perhaps two thousand feet above the valley. Beyond it a ridge descended for a distance, then rose again until it reached another summit some two thousand feet higher than the first. Beyond that the same process was

repeated again—and then again—the whole mountain building itself up in a series of ascending waves. Up and down we went along the ridge—but mostly up—now following a well-beaten trail of unimaginable antiquity, now beating our own way over virgin rock and earth. The third summit I recognized as the spot which Editor Griffis had mentioned to me as an old burial ground of the Incas. To an eye unschooled in archaeology it was impossible to tell whether any relics remained. Great boulders were piled high in fantastic design about me, but I could not tell whether they were the work of man or erosion. I could find no carvings or inscriptions.

Beyond the burial ground the ridge dipped away again, then rose again to a fourth summit, the next-to-last. As we ascended, the boulders and loose debris of the lower slopes gave way to solid rock. There were ledges, chimneys, cliffs—the sort of climbing in which a man must use hands as well as feet and for which a dog is not equipped at all. By the time we reached No. 4 peak Sally's legs were trembling, her feet were bleeding, and she was obviously exhausted. I was at a loss as to what to do. Stubborn physical courage is not uncommon among mountain climbers. Wisdom is rarer. The wisest—and, in a sense, the most courageous—thing I have ever seen a man do on a mountain occurred on Mt. Olympus, in Greece. A member of the party with whom I was climbing, feeling himself becoming exhausted when about two-thirds of the way up and realizing that any heroics in attempting to continue might injure him seriously, simply sat down by the side of the path and waited for the rest of us to reach the summit and return. Just that! Now Sally was faced with the same problem, and she solved it in the same way. There was no whimpering, no barking, and no admonitions needed from me. Down she sat herself on Peak No. 4, looked at me as much as to say: "Go on, you damn fool—climb it!" and settled herself to await my return. Sally, my friends, was a mountaineer and a lady.

The three thousand-odd feet above No. 4 was laborious rock climbing. In the Alps the same rocks would have been dangerous

because slippery from rain or snow; but here where no moisture falls there was always a sound, dry foot- or hand-hold at the time it was needed. The only hazard was from soft and crumbling stone, but there was not much of this. I was careful, however, to test the soundness of a ledge or hold before trusting my whole weight to it and on one occasion dislodged a boulder that must have weighed a ton by the easy pressure of one foot. At two-thirty in the afternoon I reached the summit, only to find, of course, that it was not *the* summit at all, but merely a stepping-stone to loftier peaks beyond it. It was, however, the peak I had picked as my objective—from Chosica it hides the mountains beyond—and, pinnacle or no pinnacle, it damn well was as far as I was going that day. It had not been the longest or the hardest climb of my life, but I think, in that broiling tropical sun and without moisture of any kind between heaven and earth, it was probably the most grueling. My soggy cheese sandwich and my beer-bottle of water were caviar and champagne.

Unable to satisfy my ego by taking a picture of myself (how *do* lone travelers succeed in getting themselves photographed in the most isolated spots?) I laid out my handkerchief on the top-most rock and snapped it, lest like Marco Polo and Captain Cook I should meet the unhappy fate of public incredulity. Like practically all my photographs of the Andes—like practically all of anybody's, for that matter—it turned out badly. The mountains are so devoid of color, there is so little light and shadow in their monotonous expanse, and the sky is so cloudless and textureless that even the most sensitive camera will usually produce only a gray and washed-out likeness. A Panagra pilot in Lima told me he had been taking aerial photographs of the Andes for five years and hadn't got a good one yet. With my five-dollar box I might as well have been taking pictures of Morningside Heights.

After about half an hour on the summit I began the descent. Going down a mountain is always a less laborious business than going up, but, in compensation, it is usually more dangerous. Old Man Gravity, your relentless enemy through all your upward march, is now suddenly your ally, and life is much the

pleasanter for the association. But he is a treacherous ally at best, liking nothing better than to lull you into a sense of false ease and then betray you. A human body descending carries far more weight and momentum than the same body ascending. Ledges that supported you on the way up will crumble beneath you on the way down; loose rock will slide away beneath your feet; shallow holds on a cliff wall that gave purchase to your hands when you scaled it will now evade or prove too small for your foot as it searches for them from above. It requires less effort to descend than to ascend a mountain, but it should take more care and almost as much time.

By the time I had come down to Peak No. 4 the ferocious heat of the day had passed and the sun was sloping off into the west. Sally's barking welcomed me as I approached, and she rose to greet me from a shallow hole under a boulder which she had dug herself for shade. I was not surprised to see her. It had not occurred to me for even a moment that she might leave while I was gone—nor, apparently, had it occurred to her either. We continued the descent together down a mountain no longer ash-gray but richly red in the soft light of early evening. As we neared the ancient burial grounds on the third summit Chosica, in its far-below valley, was already in shadow, and the dark band of night was slowly climbing the slopes below us. We sat down for a moment to rest.

With the scuffing of my boots and Sally's paws silenced, a monstrous stillness had suddenly taken being about me. In all the world there was no sound and no motion; only the endless barren mountains and fading light and the red sun sinking. Then, as I watched, a dozen yellow pin-points pricked the shadows in the valley far below. They were the street lamps of Chosica, being lit against the night that was already closing in. Soon night would close in on the mountains too, and they would be dark and cold in their awful desolation. There were warmth and kindness in the tiny lights. Far up through the great gorges they brought a friendly message of shelter, supper and bed.

Beyond the town the hills fell away in endless, seamed mo-

notony, and the valley of the Rimac broadened out toward the Pacific. I could faintly discern the winding gleam of the Central Railroad's tracks, on which, two weeks before, I had come up to Chosica and the Andes. Unnumbered thousands of men, I thought, had come up that valley before me. For more than four hundred years they had come—soldiers, priests, merchants, prospectors, adventurers, fugitives, men in rags. Some had come on armored horses, some on mules, some afoot, some—in latter day magnificence—in swift sedans and the Central's coaches. Some had brought with them death by the sword, some merchandise to trade, some salvation, some mining machinery, some schemes of empire, some only a camera and a restless heart. They had scaled the mountains, followed the rivers, hacked the jungles, tunneled the earth. They had come from the great cities and civilizations of the world and each of them according to his own thinking and desire had penetrated the unknown wilderness in pursuit of what he sought. And now I too had come—

My eyes swung slowly from the valley to the reddening hills; then east to where the darkness of night was already piled high upon the Andes. What was it that all these men had wanted? What was it that had drawn them from the familiar routine of their lives into these desolate, distant mountains? What did they hope to find on the other side? El Dorado, perhaps—the Gilded Man. But what was that? To some a handful of gold dust, to others a mine or a plantation, to others fortune, conquest, adventure, escape. For each a different purpose and a different goal; for each a different magic that beckoned from beyond the ancient hills. But for each the same fair, far prize—the body's fulfillment, the soul's peace, the heart's desire.

For four hundred years they had passed beneath the ridges of this Rimac Valley—hungry, restless, feverish, eager men from distant continents. Carelessly and ruthlessly they had exterminated the weaker men who were there before them—with the sword, with gunpowder, with disease, with poverty—and gone on to their farther horizons and their higher mountains. And for four hundred years these crude, weathered stones among which

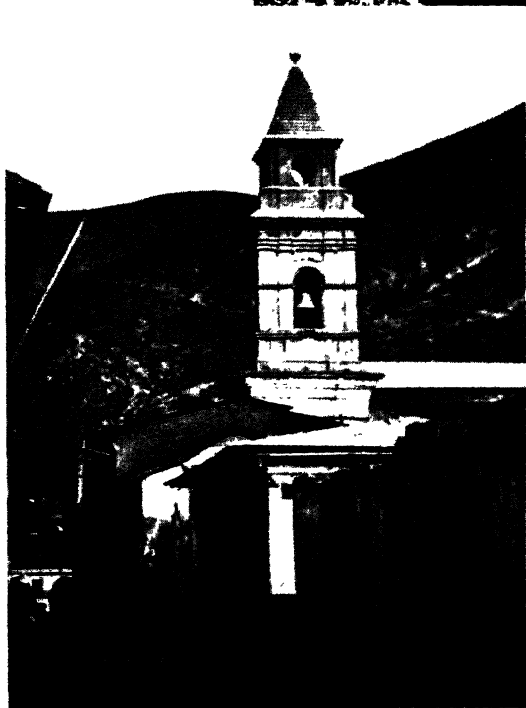
I sat had loomed above them—one of a thousand graveyards of a civilization they had killed. Among their red-brown, scarified shapes there was no sound or movement; in the high, forgotten desolation of that mountain side only one thing lived and brooded—Time. Time alone had survived the invasion. It had seen them all as they passed below—the conquerors and the conquered, the seekers and the fugitives, the liberators and the enslavers. It had seen their victories and defeats, their wealth, their poverty, their wars. It had seen their hopes, their struggles and their fears. Through the long valley each one had come and gone, and each had sought the Gilded Man of his own heart's desire. Some had sought him in these very hills; some on the great peaks beyond; some in the dark jungle to the east. But Time marked them all as they passed. And all of them failed, and all of them died, and none of them mattered.

Now the long red rays of dying day streamed horizontal from the west. The jagged line of a distant ridge cut the lower arc of the sun. Its glow was in the texture of the mountains; its fire was in the gleaming of the peaks.

The men among whose graves I sat had worshiped the sun. By day they flourished in its life-giving warmth; at night they built fires and muttered incantations to bring it back. There was no fever in their blood, no far and fabulous El Dorado they must seek. Their Gilded One was not remote beyond peak and horizon but bright and living in the sky above them. Man's life was a passing from darkness into darkness, and his brief light was the sun's light. But the sun's light was its own, and was everlasting. In it they lived and worshiped. In its contemplation they found fulfillment and peace.

These men are long since dead. For four hundred years the men toiling up the Rimac Valley have been of other breed and other faith. No longer is the sun a god to be worshiped, but only a flaming planet in the sky to warm us and light us on our way. Our gods are elsewhere—behind the mountains, beyond the jungles, in the remote darkness of the unknowable. Through this valley we have come in our search, and passed beyond it, un-

NAT WHITTEN



THE CHURCH  
AT TARMA



appeased and unsatisfied, and in our passing we have made extinct the race of men who thought the sun was God.

But have we found a better one?

Presently I arose. The red glow had drained from the stones about me, from the peaks, from the sky. I called to Sally, and together we descended the mountain into a valley grown dark and cold, from which the sun had gone.

## V

### ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS

"MR. JAMES ULLMAN, of New York, is a visitor in Lima at the present time. He is planning to make the overland trip to Iquitos via the Pichis Trail at an early date and would like to hear from anyone also contemplating this trip. He may be addressed, care of The West Coast Leader, P.O. Box 531, Lima."

Thus *The West Coast Leader* of January 16, 1937.

It was Editor Griffis' idea and I was a bit squeamish about it at first, it being my maiden appearance in the Lonely Hearts' Column of a newspaper. Heretofore I had never considered these doubtless worthy departments in anything but a strictly humorous light: "Young man, graduate of four colleges, speaks seven languages, will go anywhere, do anything." "Single lady, vivacious personality, highest character and intelligence, desires to correspond with gentleman of same qualifications." I hesitated to throw in my lot with those accomplished but thwarted souls.

"What the hell?" argued Griffis. "You don't want to go alone. Maybe there's another damn fool hanging around Lima who'll go with you. What have you got to lose?"

So I let him put the squib in the *Leader* and dismissed it from my mind.

In case you've forgotten, the idea of this trip of mine was not to settle down in Chosica for the rest of my life, but to cross South America from the Pacific to the Atlantic, preferably by a little frequented route. Both in New York, before sailing, and during the month I spent in Lima and Chosica I had been reading up and asking questions of practically everyone I met, with this objective in view. At home I found no one whose first-hand

knowledge of South America extended beyond Buenos Aires, Rio, Santiago and Lima, and even in Peru itself astonishingly few of the resident gringos had ever penetrated farther than fifty or a hundred miles from the coast. Almost all, of course, had information or advice to impart, but it usually turned out to be something that someone had told someone who had told them, and it had always been at least ten years since the someone had been there, and it may not have been there at all, but two other places. Few people were as forthright and honest as the Grace Line passenger agent who said to me: "Señor Ullman, for Casa Grace the interior of South America does not exist."

In point of fact, this is just about the truth of the matter—and not only as it concerns Casa Grace. Over eighty percent of the total population of South America live within a hundred miles of either the Atlantic or Pacific oceans, and virtually all the large cities are on the seacoast. (The few exceptions—La Paz, Bogotá, Quito, Asuncion, Caracas—are none of them more than a few hundred miles inland.) Most of the railroads run either parallel to the coast or merely a few miles into the interior as an outlet for nearby mines or plantations. There are three transcontinental rail routes—all of them out of Buenos Aires, and all of them crossing the continent in its southern half, where it tapers off greatly in width. The first runs from B.A. southwestward across the Argentine pampas to the Chilean lake district at Osorno, where it connects with Chile's coastal system; the second, and best-known, connects B.A. with Santiago and Valparaiso in an almost direct line; the third, the final links of which have but recently been completed, crosses the northern Argentine, cuts through Bolivia to La Paz, and connects with the Southern Railway of Peru, which reaches the Pacific at Mollendo. North of this there is not a transcontinental railroad in the Western hemisphere until one reaches the United States—if one excepts the short lines across the Isthmuses of Panama and Tehuantepec.

Though airplane travel has developed more rapidly than other means of transportation in South America, it too has as yet scarcely penetrated the interior of the continent. The big com-

mercial lines, Pan-American Airways and Panagra, operate almost exclusively between the coastal cities. Most of the individual republics have their own aviation companies, but these too hug the seaboard closely and when they do venture inland almost invariably reach their terminus at some border town of their own and provide no means of farther progress. The only trans-continental air route follows the line of the Buenos Aires-Santiago railway, far to the south where the distance from ocean to ocean is less than eight hundred miles. The nearest approach to a through airway in the tropics is along the course of the Amazon and its tributaries. The Peruvian army runs a weekly plane (sometimes more in theory than in practice, as we shall see) from Lima to Iquitos, and Brazil has a weekly service from Pará to Manáos; but between Iquitos and Manáos, there is a thousand-mile gap that has not yet been spanned. Over the rest of the continent's vast interior the jungle silence is unbroken either by puffing locomotive or droning propeller.

All this was perfectly satisfactory to me. It was neither my plan nor desire to cross South America in a Pullman compartment or a tri-motored Sikorsky. But the problem remained—how to go? The only thing of which I was pretty certain from the outset was that my route, for the greater part of its extent, would follow the course of the Amazon. This would be so both by choice and geographical necessity. I was a long way from being an expedition equipped to penetrate virgin jungle and would have to use such means of transportation as the country afforded. Then, too, neither the time nor the cash at my disposal were of expeditionary proportions, and it was not among my plans to reach journey's—and pocketbook's—end in a crocodile swamp or up a rubber tree in the center of Matto Grosso. Most potent of all, however, were the claims of the Amazon itself. It would be a geographical impossibility to cross South America near the equator and not make frequent contact with the great river that flows to the Atlantic from within a hundred miles of the Pacific and drains an area of over three million square miles. Once I had crossed the Andes, I might be in Peru or Bolivia or Brazil or

Ecuador, but I would also be in Amazonia, and, however I traveled, in Amazonia I would remain until I reached the eastern ocean.

There were several possible overland routes from the Pacific to the headwaters of the river or its tributaries. I could go to Bolivia and cross from La Paz to the Beni and Madeira rivers, which flow down to the Amazon. I could head east from Quito, in Ecuador, to the Napo, another tributary. Or there were three possible routes in Peru itself: from Paita to Piura to the Marañón; from Lima to Cerro de Pasco to Huánuco to the Huallaga; and, finally, from Lima to the Chanchamayo Valley and thence by the Pichis Trail to the Ucayali. Marañón, Huallaga and Ucayali, the three great rivers of Peru, eventually meet near Iquitos, forming the Amazon proper, and from that point on my way would be along the main stream itself. Tentatively I had selected the Pichis as my route, partly because it seemed both the shortest and most varied and partly because it was the only one concerning which I could secure even the vaguest information.

Early in the game I learned not to waste my time on maps. For information, that is; for fantasy and humor they were inexhaustible. Each South American republic, in its own maps, invariably assigns about two-thirds of the continent's total area to itself and grudgingly leaves the remaining one-third to be divided among its sister nations. Thus the Peruvian maps show that fair land extending endlessly northward practically to the Panama Canal, leaving to Ecuador and Colombia tracts about the size of Central Park; whereas the latter countries, in their own geographies, sweep so far southward that poor Peru is all but shoved off the continent into the Antarctic Ocean. The neutral maps play safe: almost every international boundary line in South America is discreetly labeled: **UNDETERMINED**.

In the matter of cities, the cartographers incline toward optimism rather than accuracy. Let a lone explorer or prospector build himself an overnight lean-to in the jungle, and it promptly becomes a flourishing metropolis—on the maps. The sites of former haciendas and rubber stations, long abandoned and oblit-

erated by the forest, are still duly recorded as busy centers of population. On my particular route through Amazonian Peru and Brazil, I was to discover, not more than two-thirds of the towns indicated on the maps existed at all, and half of those that did consisted of only one building, or a fraction of a building.

But where your South American atlas attains true imaginative genius is in the realm of transportation. Glance at a native-made map of Peru, and for a moment you will think you are looking at the suburbs of Chicago. The countryside is black with lines of communication. Express trains roar from city to city; broad concrete highways cover the countryside like a spider's web; interurban electric trams dart about like mosquitoes. It is magnificent. Presently, however, the *Explicacion* in the lower right-hand corner catches your eye:

FERROCARRILS IN EXPLOTACION:	_____
“ IN PROYECTO:	-----
“ IN ESTUDIO:	.....

And, looking back at the map, you discover that for every half-inch of \_\_\_\_\_ there is a foot of ----- and about ten yards of ..... At the present time there are 2600 miles of railroad and 1500 miles of paved roads in Peru, but if ever the *proyectos* and *estudios* come to fruition, the whole republic will be virtually one vast grade-crossing.

No, maps were not the greatest help in the world; but Mrs. Morris was. Her enthusiasm for the Pichis trip was unbounded, and her description of it, though she had not made the journey in ten years, had an authentic ring. Every day for three weeks she decided she would go with me, and every evening she changed her mind. Meanwhile she had introduced me to one Colonel Lembke, prefect of Callao, who had surveyed the Pichis Trail as a possible military highway during the Peruvian-Colombian dispute in 1933 and was reported to know more about the region than any man in the country.

Lembke himself was a remarkable man—one of those complete

and unclassifiable cosmopolites whom one is occasionally apt to encounter in South America. His father had been German and his mother English, but he himself had been born in Peru, was a Peruvian citizen and had a Peruvian wife. During the World War he had served as a major in the British army but returned to South America as soon as he was demobilized. He spoke English, German and Spanish—as well as French—perfectly, and told me that one seemed his native tongue to him no more than another. And he *did* know the Pichis Trail. The way for me to go, he said, was with the Iquitos mail, which was dispatched fortnightly from Lima. The place for me to make my arrangements was Tarma, a town on the eastern slope of the Andes near the western terminus of the Pichis. The man for me to see there was an American called Whitten, who ran the local hotel. Whatever Colonel Lembke's involved nationality may have been, his command of facts was most un-Latin American. When subsequently I discovered that they were not only approximately, but strictly, accurate he assumed in my mind the stature of a second Bolívar.

While research and investigation progressed, there had been happenings back at Chosica. There was an earthquake, through which I slept, a minor revolution which none of us knew about until we read the next day's newspapers, and a *dirumbi* on the railroad, which we denizens of the *quinta* attended en masse. A *dirumbi* is the onomatopoetic Spanish word for a landslide, and the Ferrocarril Central makes a specialty of them—especially at the beginning of the rainy season in the sierra when the Andean peaks develop a weakness for sliding off into their valleys. This particular slide had occurred just a few miles above Chosica and was discovered by the operator of the handcar which was proceeding the daily down-bound train from Oroya. (On the Central these handcars—or gravity-cars—are always sent along the track a mile or so in advance of the trains coming down for the express purpose of watching out for landslides or fallen boulders. The train itself, coasting down the steep grades, would be unable to stop in time to avoid disaster.) As construction engineer for

the railroad, Ted Waters was needed at the scene to direct operations, and the proper *quinta* spirit moved the rest of us to accompany him. The triplicate result was that we got in everyone's way, missed dinner, and got well soaked in the first heavy rainfall that Chosica's environs had seen in six months. But it was, nevertheless, a very fine *dirumbi* indeed, complete with boulders, mud, shouting sub-prefectos and indignant passengers with parrots. After some two hours a special train came up from Lima to the downhill side of the *dirumbi*, passengers and freight were transferred, and we went home to sneeze. The next morning the last of the debris had been cleared away, and the morning train for the sierra snorted uphill as usual. The Central knows how to take Andean tantrums in its stride.

"From Griffis, at the *Leader*," said Mrs. Morris, handing me an envelope. I opened it and pulled out a card which read:

Buttons	Work Clothing
PEARLITE	PEARLROCK
Trimming	Buttons
HERMAN LORD	
Mgr. Export Sales	Fresh Water
AUTOMATIC BUTTON CO.	A B C
Muscatine, Iowa, U.S.A.	Pearl Buttons

And on the reverse side:

MR. JAMES ULLMAN:

I would like to talk to you about your trip over the Pichis Trail, as I have been studying the possibility of going to Iquitos.

HERMAN LORD, Room 235, Bolívar Hotel.

In twenty minutes—par for the Peruvian Telephone Corporation—I was speaking to "the other damn fool in Lima."

"I'm going up to Tarma tomorrow," I said, "to make inquiries about the Pichis. How about coming along?"

"Where the hell's Tarma?"

"Oh, up the hill and down the other side a way. Can you make it?"

"*Como no?*" he replied.

Both his card and he himself said he was Herman Lord of Muscatine, Iowa, but it was a gross misstatement. His name was Daniel Boone Rover Merriwell-Quixote, and his home was next door to Peter Pan's in Cloud-Cuckoo Land. He was tall and lank and forty-two; his face was as fresh as a Boy Scout's, and above it a bang of thinning but unruly hair shot heavenwards. He was as American as peanuts-at-the-ball-game. I could no more have missed him as I boarded the Central's crowded coach at the Chosica station than I could have missed an albino in a crowd of negro chimney sweeps.

"Hi-ya, Jim!" he roared.

"How-do-you-do, Mr. — er —. How's a boy, Herman!" I shouted back. And we shook.

For once, on the trip up to Oroya, the wonders of the Andes and the Ferrocarril Central took a back seat; I was busy becoming acquainted with another and equally remarkable phenomenon. And the phenomenon being perhaps the most enthusiastic and communicative I have ever encountered, the process was bewilderingly rapid. By the time we were lunching in Matucana, I felt that we had been the most intimate of friends since kindergarten days, or earlier.

Herman Benjamin Lord (I shall call him by his pseudonym instead of his real name of Merriwell-Quixote) was an Iowa farm boy. He had run away from high school at seventeen to volunteer in the U. S. Army, served on the Mexican border long enough to lose his illusions about military life, and quit just in time to be drafted back again for the World War. After the War, during which he still didn't get out of Texas, he tried his hand

at several businesses, making a little money at most of them. In 1933, considerably to his own surprise, he was elected mayor of Muscatine. During his first year in office his life was threatened for hounding the town's bootleggers and gamblers; during his second year he was impeached for *not* hounding the town's bootleggers and gamblers, but was honorably reinstated after two days and subsequently elected for a second term. He likes company, drinks moderately ("but no fancy drinks"), and never reads a book if he can help it. He is a member of (1) the American Legion, (2) the Order of Masons, (3) the Knights of Pythias, (4) the Muscatine Rotary Club, (5) the Muscatine Kiwanis Club, (6) the Muscatine Lions' Club, (7) the Muscatine Chamber of Commerce, (8) the Muscatine Better Business Association and (9) the Muscatine Wesleyan Sunday School Board. He likes to make "public addresses" and to call people "folks."

A Babbitt? A Main-Streeter? A solid, stolid burgher from the Corn Belt? That was my snap judgment, and I couldn't possibly have shot wider of the mark. For the measure of a man, one is too apt to forget, is not his face nor his haircut nor his home town, neither is it his vocabulary nor his clubs—no, nor even his politics nor his faith. The measure of a man is the fellow who dwells in the inner darkness behind his cranium and his seventh rib—who thinks his thoughts, who feels his emotions, who dreams his dreams. And the fellow who dwelt within the cranium and ribs of Herman Lord bore the proud name of Daniel Boone Rover Merriwell-Quixote.

"Iquitos—hard to get to, isn't it? That's swell! Hot damn—I bet that Pichis is one hell of a tough trek. You know, some day if I ever make enough money, I'm going to buy a little launch and sail around Cape Horn. Have you ever been to Africa? Tibet? Borneo? Boy, I'm going to get to all of 'em before I'm through. I'll tell you, Jim—sometimes I get to thinking how Goddamned big the world is, and how many people and things it's got in it that I don't know, but that I want to know. And then I get a kind of feeling inside me—a sort of a pushing, a sort of needing—and I

just pack up my stuff and clear out of Muscatine and go and go—”

Babbitt, hell! They've written epics about that fellow.

At Casapalca our mutual life histories were temporarily discontinued. A Peruvian family entered the coach to bid farewell to a departing member, and when a Peruvian family starts saying farewell it's to the boats, men, and Hitler take the hindmost! This particular group was not large, judged by Latin-American standards (there could not have been more than fifteen all told), but it made up in demonstrativeness what it lacked in numbers, and the train, as if in sinister collusion, indulged in an extra-long stop. We covered up as best we could, while gestures, shouts and kisses flew madly about the car. At last the whistle tooted, the relatives departed, and we were alone in the car with the battered but happy traveler, who was probably going to Oroya for the week-end.

“As I was saying,” continued Herman, gently removing the newcomer's baggage from his lap—

It seems that during the past year he had had the good fortune to run for Congress on the Republican ticket—which left him a free and unencumbered man on the evening of the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, 1936.

“The Automatic Button Company wanted a man to establish South American sales agencies,” he said, “and also to muck around in the rivers down here for shells they can use in the manufacturing end. I took the job. So far I've been in Mexico, all the Central American republics, Colombia, Ecuador and now Peru. I don't speak a damn word of Spanish, but I get along fine.”

“How about Iquitos?” I asked. “Are there supposed to be good shells there?”

“Millions of them—up and down the Amazon, along the Ucayali, up the smaller tributaries, in the damndest places you ever heard of. That's why I'm going there.”

It wasn't why he was going, and he knew it wasn't, and I knew

it wasn't. But I suppose he had to give his company some reason. After all, the chap they were employing was named Lord—not Merriwell-Quixote.

Squash— Something white and soft and altogether un-South American flattened itself against the coach window. The train had stopped at Ticlio, highest point on the line, the *puno* about us was covered with two inches of snow, and the train crew was having a snowball fight. We pulled on our topcoats and watched our breaths turn to steam in the thin, cold air. A few passengers were leaving the train to make the connection for Morococha, for which Ticlio is the junction. Morococha is one of the many mining properties of the Cerro de Pasco Copper Company, and in reaching it, the railway attains an altitude of almost 16,500 feet—almost a thousand feet higher than the main line. Passengers are not carried in a regulation train, but in an *autocarril*—in this case a station-wagon from which the regular wheels have been removed and supplanted by steel wheels, in the same way as on Ted Water's Chevrolet. Train and *autocarril* moved off simultaneously—the former tooting its whistle, the latter answering with its horn, and in a moment we were in the darkness of the Galera Tunnel under Mt. Meiggs. Presently we were on the downgrade and coasting, hell-bent for Oroya.

The town of Oroya, one hundred miles east of Lima, just over the crest of the continental divide, is the most American-looking community I have seen south of the Rio Grande. It is not, however, American-looking in the better sense. The site of the smelters and principal mining operations of the Cerro de Pasco Company, it is what would be known in the States as a company town. As one coasts down to it from the sierras on the Central, it announces its approach with a thick smudge of soot against the sky, and once within its limits one is never out of the shadow of its tall chimneys and enormous furnaces. Indeed, apart from the operations of the mining corporation, Oroya cannot be said to exist. Seventy-five percent of its working population are employed either in the mines or smelters; they dwell in company-

built houses, eat in the company commissary, buy from the company store. By virtue of expert supervision the town, in spite of its soot, is cleaner and more healthful than almost any other community in the Peruvian Andes; but to the eye it presents only that forlorn drabness typical the world over of machine-made slums. The company-built workmen's homes, stretching row on row in endless uniformity, are beyond question better equipped and sanitated than the usual *cholo's* hovel, but these desirable improvements have been accompanied by the loss of all color, variety and individuality. A company official told me that it is often absolutely impossible to induce a peon family to move from the filth of its ancestral shack to the clean but arid modernity of those jerry-built boxes.

As Grace dominates the Peruvian seaboard, so does Cerro de Pasco the sierra. In addition to its main plant at Oroya, it operates vast properties at Cerro de Pasco, site of its original diggings, Morococha, and smaller units on practically every ore-bearing hill in a hundred-mile radius. Like most big and successful corporations, it has, over a period of years, bought out or squeezed out its lesser competitors, with the result that it now has the almost undisputed run of the show in the central Peruvian Andes. In addition to copper, it mines and refines gold, silver, bismuth, vanadium, and many other metals; it markets chemicals as well as ores; it runs its own railroad from Oroya to Cerro de Pasco, and in every community in which it functions operates its own hotel, store, hospital and power plant. It is far and away the Central Railroad's biggest customer and virtually stands alone as the only major industry in its section of the country.

Added to its routine cares and interests, Cerro de Pasco has one major problem which one would not ordinarily associate with the operating of a mining company: namely, liquor. By long and strong tradition, the gringo in the tropics is supposed to favor the bottle, and I must report that, with a few exceptions, he tries to live up to his reputation. In the jungle he blames it on the heat; in the sierra (Oroya is 12,500 feet above the sea) on the altitude. Actually he probably drinks because there is so

little else for him to do in his spare time. But, whatever the reason, the company takes official cognizance of the situation in an elaborate stagger system of work days and holidays, whereby its American employees are enabled to spend one or two days of each week away from the plant. If Johnny Jones is going to insist on satisfying a penchant for singing off-key or breaking furniture, Cerro de Pasco much prefers that he do so in the Bolívar Grill in Lima rather than in its new turbine-shed in Oroya.

The gringo, of course, is far from being a lone black sheep in a white flock; though loath to adopt certain other refinements of civilization, the Andean Indian has taken with enthusiasm to the white man's alcohol. Like most races accustomed to living in primitive circumstances, he is not constituted to withstand its rigors, and drunkenness, in its most stupefying and bestial forms, is perhaps as common in the Andes as any place on earth. And as it does with the gringo, so does the company take official notice of the *cholo's* vice: the mines are closed the day following every pay day and sometimes for as long as a week after Carnival or other important feast-days. Whereas the gringo probably drinks whisky, the *cholo* drinks *pisco* or *chacta*, the latter a strong rum made from sugar cane; and whereas the gringo says it's the altitude, the *cholo* doesn't say anything.

From Oroya the Central Railroad turns south for Huancayo and Huancavelica, and the mining company's line heads north for Cerro de Pasco. Tarma lies due east, and the thirty-mile trip is made by car—usually by *collectiva*. The *collectiva*, a highly popular Peruvian institution, is just what its name implies—a “collector.” Built most often in the form of a station-wagon, its function is halfway between that of a taxicab and a bus. It starts when it's full—or as full as the driver thinks profitable—and selects as its route a sort of general compromise between the destinations of the various passengers. Its waiting capacities are almost limitless (I have seen one with six passengers aboard wait at the home of a prospective seventh for half an hour, while that worthy had a leisurely breakfast and bath), but once under way

they are probably the quickest and cheapest means of transportation in the country. The drivers are experts; on most Peruvian highways they damn well have to be.

Our particular *collectiva* from Oroya to Tarma was a daily fixture and there was no waiting. In one minute flat it was loaded to the mudguards with a heterogeneous assortment of humans, animals and freight, and we were off. Herman was in the front seat with the driver, two little girls, the twin brother of Maxim Gorki and a live goose. As my seat-mates in the rear I had pretty nearly everyone's baggage, an old Indian woman chewing coca leaves and a solemn-faced boy of about ten, with cross-eyes, a high celluloid collar and an enormous black homburg hat. Half-way down the main street our progress was abruptly halted by the passing of a large herd of llamas, the antique, leisurely dignity of their procession providing a strange contrast with the bristling modernity of chimneys and furnaces about them. As we honked our way through them they contemplated us with supercilious eyes and minced daintily on their way, their light burdens bouncing to the rhythm of their gait. For the llama (pronounced "yama," please) is the original trade-unionist of the animal kingdom—he will accept a load of almost exactly one hundred pounds, but if another ounce is added will promptly lie down and refuse to budge. The mule, on the other hand, is an open-shop worker—though half the llama's size he will carry four times as heavy a burden without inconvenience or complaint. It is an obvious, but knotty, labor problem which the Aprista will doubtless tackle if they ever come into power.

Soon, however, llamas, mules, smelters and APRA signs on the walls were all behind us, and our *collectiva* was grinding in solitude through the desolation of the high Andes. For the first half-hour, the road ascended, then leveled off to cross the summit plateau before descending on the other side to Tarma. Half-way across the plateau it began to snow—at first lightly, but soon in great, heavy flakes that blanketed the windows and reduced the world's horizon to a radius of six feet about the car. It suddenly became penetratingly cold, a thick mist rolled in from

the surrounding peaks and mingled with the snow, and for an hour we crawled along over what seemed the surface of an unknown and lifeless planet. By what psychic perceptions our driver followed the twisting road I do not know, but eventually we found ourselves on the down grade and fogbound winter was receding behind us. By this time, however, as if through some sinister prearrangement, everyone in the *collectiva*, with the exception of the driver, the cross-eyed boy, Herman and myself, decided to have *soroché* simultaneously, and throughout the last lap of our journey the air was rent with unceasing moans, retchings and worse. Night and exhaustion were both closing in on us when at last we floundered through Tarma's muddy streets to the hotel and heard a hearty voice shouting: "What ho, gringos!"

If Oroya is a town of one industry, Tarma is one of none. In a fashion it serves as clearing-house and transshipment point for the produce of the fertile Chanchamayo Valley to the east, but in essence it is simply a quiet village—smokeless, machineless, and almost tradeless. We made our descent upon it at a bad moment—heavy rains of the week past had transformed its unpaved streets into almost impassable swamps—but its attractiveness was none the less apparent and genuine. Situated at an altitude of about ten thousand feet, it enjoys a climate midway between the extremes of the bleak *puno* above and the tropical jungle below. Maize, cotton, oranges and grapes flourish in the surrounding countryside, and every road is bordered by endless rows of majestic eucalyptus trees. The air is clear and keen; the cattle sleek and well-fed, the inhabitants rosy cheeked and not too dirty. Altogether it was by far the most prepossessing Andean town which I visited.

Inasmuch as the local hotel (called The Bolívar, of course) was operated by a gringo, it was reasonably clean and comfortable, but already we were presented with indications that we were nearing the frontier of civilization and its gadgets. Instead of opening off corridors the rooms surrounded an open patio in the

center of the building; napkins had disappeared from the scheme of things in the dining room, to be supplanted by the ancient Latin institution of the edge of the tablecloth; and water no longer came out of pipes, but out of pitchers. Not only that, but it came out cold, and neither pleas, threats nor moans of distress could alter its temperature. After one attempt at shaving in the thirty-degree cold of early morning we took the path of least resistance. We stopped shaving.

Our host, Nathaniel C. Whitten, was a man of leisurely habits, but in effecting arrangements for our prospective trip he was positively Napoleonic. Scarcely had we established ourselves in our room when one Señor Deludighi, the local mail-contractor, made his appearance. The overland mail for the *montaña*, he informed us, was dispatched fortnightly, and the next mule-train would leave Tarma on January 26th, about ten days hence. He suggested we engage three mules between us—two for riding and one for our combined baggage. We must let him know at least four days before the twenty-sixth whether or not we were going, so that he could have the mules ready for us. The cost for the three of them for the week's trip, including their food and the services of an *arriero*, or mule-driver, would be fifteen Peruvian pounds—about thirty-eight dollars. "*Buenos noches, señors.*"

The whole thing was most un-Peruvian. We had come to Tarma anticipating at least three days of guerrilla warfare with uninterested clerks, misinformed guides and village idiots, and here we had been in Tarma for about fifteen minutes and already were supplied with all the information we wanted. Lembke, Whitten and Deludighi had between them formed a triumvirate which, within twelve degrees of the equator, had to be seen in action to be believed. The rest of our time in Tarma we spent examining the town and surrounding hills, largely in the company of Host Whitten, who encountered precious few gringos in his Andean retreat and treated us throughout our sojourn as long-lost brothers. In his decrepit Dodge—brakeless, but with the hand of God protecting it—we drove out into the countryside,

between soaring eucalyptus and cactus fences into sloping pasture lands fresh with rain and abundant with life. It provided a startling contrast to the arid desolation of the western Andes, where rain never falls. On our way we passed perhaps a dozen streams, hardly more than mountain freshets, chattering downhill to the east. It was strange to realize that, although a scant hundred miles from the Pacific, they were headed for the Amazon and the Atlantic, four thousand miles away. Already we were in the vast drainage basin of the Great River.

At night, in what passed for The Bolívar bar, liquor and conversation flowed. Oroya marks the frontier of the gringo whisky-belt, and in Tarma and beyond it was native concoctions or nothing. *Pisco* we were already familiar with, but now we made its acquaintance as *chucharwassi*, a beverage in which the brandy is mixed with the bark of a local tree—with supposedly aphrodisiac, and definitely vigorous, effect. Then there is *chacta*, a sugar-cane rum drunk universally in the *montaña* which is guaranteed to pin your ears back and make you sing the Peruvian national anthem. The only care to be taken here is to be sure you order *chacta* and not *chacra*; the latter signifies a farm, and a request for it will result either in general consternation or a visit from the local real-estate agent. Rural Peru also provides a variety of beverages of more exotic fabrication, but the Grand Prix winner is a concoction whose name I never have been able to discover. Recipe:

1. One quart *pisco*.
2. One live snake, preferably poisonous.
3. Place snake in *pisco*; let him drown.
4. Seal bottle and put on shelf for one year.
5. Shake well and serve.

Somehow I was never quite thirsty enough to try it.

If the drinks at The Bolívar bar were colorful, so was their dispenser. Nathaniel C. Whitten was one of the old-school South American gringos, rapidly disappearing before the present-day influx of Fords, Frigidaires and *turista*. His father, though a

Yankee, had been a rubber planter in the Fiji Islands, and it was there that Nat was born. When in his late 'teens, he came to the States, studied mining engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and subsequently worked for Anaconda Copper at its main plant in Montana. When the World War came, he enlisted, and in 1918 was one of the American force of occupation sent to Vladivostok in Siberia. It was so cold there, he declares, that he firmly resolved to spend the rest of his life, after demobilization, in the tropics—to compensate. Sure enough, in 1920 he secured a job as engineer with the Cerro de Pasco Copper Company and was sent to Peru, where he has been ever since. In 1930, when the world depression struck at copper, as well as elsewhere, Cerro de Pasco let him go, but instead of returning home he moved thirty miles down the hill to Tarma, bought the local hotel, and dug in for keeps. He has a wife and grown son in Arizona (at least he *thinks* they're in Arizona), whom he has not seen in seventeen years. He doubts if he ever will. "They like it there and I like it here," he says.

At fifty he is gray haired, ruddy, and at peace with the world. He seems to know practically every inhabitant of Peru, but seldom leaves the vicinity of Tarma and in recent years has had so little occasion to speak English that he often has to stammer and grope for words when speaking his native tongue. An expert in photography, he has taken many magnificent pictures of the nearby Chanchamayo Valley and the *montaña* beyond, some of which he has sold to American and Peruvian periodicals. He talks constantly about approaching Grace, Thomas Cook's and other travel agents with plans for developing Tarma as a tourist attraction, but has done nothing about it and probably never will. Life in his Andean metropolis does not have to be progressive to be pleasant.

In the evenings we heard long yarns from Whitten about the ancient brotherhoods of beachcombers and tropical tramps. The distinction between the two orders is hazy, but corresponds roughly to that between tramps and hoboes in the States—a tropical tramp will work here and there if he has to, a beachcomber

never. There was a time when the American tropics swarmed with both species—particularly during the years following the war when so many young men were coming out of the army, jobless, rootless and with a craving for adventure. In recent years they have dwindled greatly in number; the depression, the growing mechanization of industry and agriculture, police regulations have made it almost impossible for them to scrounge a living from the casual job, the cocoanut palm or the handout. But, according to Whitten, there are a few still roaming the continent, and though their ranks are decimated, their lore and traditions remain alive. Over a period of three days, he pieced together for me the words of a rambling jingle, indigenous to the tropical tramps, which he said he had picked up bit by bit from a hundred men over a period of some fifteen years. He believed that a few scattered lines have been published in an American collection of tramp and sailor ballads, but as far as he knew—and as far as I know—it has never before been set down in its entirety. Here it is, as I jotted it down from his dictation:

### *RHYME OF THE TROPICAL TRAMP*

Well, son—you've come to the tropics and heard all you had  
to do  
Was sit in the shade of a cocoanut glade, while the pesos roll  
in to you.  
You got your dope at the consul's. Did you get your statistics  
straight?  
—Well, hear what it did to another kid before you decide your  
fate.  
  
You don't go down with a short, hard fall; you sorta shuffle  
along,  
Light'ning your load of the moral code, till you can't tell right  
from wrong.  
I started in to be honest—everything on the square—  
But a man can't fool with the Golden Rule when his own crowd  
don't shoot fair.  
It's a case of playing a crooked game or being an also-ran;  
My only hope was to steal and dope the horse of another man.

I was running a deal in Guayaquil—an Inca silver mine,  
And before they found it was salted ground I was safe in the  
Argentine.

I made short wait on the River Plate, while running a freighter  
there,  
And cracked a crib on a large estate and never turned a hair.  
But the thing that'll double-bar my soul when it flaps at heaven's  
doors

Was selling booze to the *Santa Cruz*, and Winchester 44's.  
Made unafraid by my kindly aid, the drunken mob swept down  
And left in a hell of a quivering blaze a flourishing border-town.

I was then in charge of a smugglers' barge off the coast of  
Yucatan,  
But she went to hell off the Cozumel one night in a hurrican'.  
I made ashore on a broken oar in the measly, shrieking dark,  
With the other two of the good ship's crew converted into shark.  
I flagged a skiff from a limestone cliff with my salt-soaked pair  
of jeans,  
And made my way, for I couldn't pay, on a fruiter to New  
Orleans.

It's a sorta habit, the tropics; it gets you worse than rum.  
You get away and you swear you'll stay, but she calls and back  
you come.

I stuck a while with the rank and file, but soon I was back on  
the job—

Running a war in Salvador with a barefoot, black-faced mob.  
I was General-Commandante then at the head of a nigger revolt,  
But my only friend from beginning to end was a punishing army  
Colt.

I might have been Presidente now—a flourishing man of means,  
But a gunboat came and blocked my game with a hundred and  
ten marines.

And then I woke from my dream, dead broke, and went from  
worse to worse,

And sunk as low as man can go, when he walks with an empty  
purse.

But stars, they say, appear by day when you're down in the deep,  
dark pit.

My lucky star found me that way when I was about to quit.  
On a fiery-hot, flea-bitten cot I was down with the yellow-jack,  
Alone in the bush and ready to die, when she came and nursed  
me back.

There was pride and grace in her brown young face, for in her  
    . was the blood of kings;

In her eyes there shone dreams of empires gone and tales of old-  
world things.

We were spliced in a Yankee meeting-house in the land of your  
Uncle Sam,

And I drew my pay from the U.S.A. while I worked on the  
Gatun Dam.

Mind you, I take no credit for coming back to my own;  
Though I walked again an honest man, I couldn't have done it  
alone.

Then the devil sent his right-hand man—I might've suspected he  
would—

And took her life with a long thin knife, because she was straight  
and good.

In me there died hope, honor, pride, and all but a primitive will  
To chase him down on his blood-red trail, find him, and kill and  
kill!

Through mahogany-swamp and chicle-camp I traced him many  
a moon,

And found my man in a big *pit-pan* on the edge of a blue lagoon.  
The chase was o'er on the farther shore—it ended a two-year  
quest,

And I left him there with a vacant stare, and a *supillote* in his  
chest.

There's a homestead down in a blue-grass town, and there's roses  
'round the gate,

And the northers whisper, "It might have been," but the truth  
has come too late.

For whatever the way, whatever the pay—for stakes that are  
great or small,

The Spell of the Tropics gathers your pile, and the Dealer takes  
it all.

"You know," said Whitten, "there were two lines in that thing—the ones about the Cozumel and the hurricane—that were driving me nuts for years. I'd heard them once, way back when I first got down here, but they slipped my mind, and in fifteen years I couldn't find a tramp or beachcomber who knew them. Then less than a year ago one blew into the hotel here and asked for a hand-out—chap named Barnes, an Englishman. He was a college graduate, played the piano like Paderewski, and was the worst drunken bum I've seen in my life. He was only about thirty-five, but he'd been on the beach in pretty near every country in the world, and in jail in half of them. But he knew those two damn lines! I was so glad to get them I kept him here on the cuff for a week, until he busted up some Chinaman's store and was jugged. When he got out he started off for Iquitos. Just like you or I'd start for the drugstore. No money, no mule, no food, no shoes—nothing. And twelve hundred miles of jungle ahead of him. I hear he made it, too. Maybe you'll see him around when you get there."

Tarma's proudest boast is a moving-picture theater, and well it should be, for it is probably unique among the movie-temples of the world. The policy is to show, of a given evening, not one complete picture, but one reel from each of five different ones. Thus, the performance we attended began with Richard Dix in "The Arizonian," moved on to Harold Lloyd in "The Milky Way" (my past still pursued me), and was in the midst of "The Gay Desperado," when weariness and dizziness forced us to beat a retreat. Whether or not they followed up the next evening with the second reels of all five pictures, and so on, I do not know; but the audience on the night we attended seemed to find nothing unusual in the proceedings and clapped, wept and laughed at the proper moments. Could it be that their reaction points a pretty moral about the Art that Comes in Cans?

On the way home from the big show we had our first, and only, experience with the major vice of the Andes—chewing coca leaves. Since long before the Spanish Conquest, the Peruvian Indian has used this narcotic, and in every Andean

village it is a common sight today to see men and women with cheeks distended with thick wads of leaf. (The *coca* plant is often confused with the *cacao* plant. The latter provides cocoa, the former cocaine, of which the leaves chewed by the Peruvian *cholos* constitute a mild form.) Fantastic stories are told of the drug's marvelous powers—how with its aid the couriers of the ancient Incas would run seventy-five miles a day with their messages; how a man chewing coca leaves can work for twenty days without food or drink. Folklore, of course. But long experience has shown that coca leaves chewed in moderate quantities undeniably do increase the energy and endurance of the user—at least for a short period of time. Taken in excess, however, it produces the same results as any drug—loss of memory, loss of will, stupefaction. As for myself, I reached neither Stage No. 1 nor Stage No. 2. Coca is usually chewed mixed with lime, to flavor it, but on our night of dissipation there seemed to be a lime-shortage in Tarma, and we took ours straight. The heavy black leaves slithered about in my mouth, grew soggy with saliva, and gave off a vague bitter taste; but I felt no irresistible impulse to climb a mountain, run a mile or pick a fight with a policeman. The most enjoyable part of the experience was to spit the whole mess out as we reached the hotel and rinse the palate with the more familiar stimulant of a *pisco* nightcap.

The next evening, sitting out in Tarma's tree-shaded plaza, the conversation skipped from this to that:

"Is that the Southern Cross?" asked Herman, pointing in the general direction of heaven.

"There is no Southern Cross," replied Whitten morosely.

We protested violently. "Why, it's been pointed out to me dozens of times," said Herman.

"Then why don't you recognize it?"

There was a moment's silence.

"Well—er—there always sort of seemed to be a little confusion. Everyone I asked always pointed it out to me, but it was always something different. Nobody ever agreed."

I thought of Dr. Jackovics on the *Santa Rita*, Enriquez in Lima, Hope Morris and Ted Waters in Chosica. All of them had showed me the Southern Cross, and each time it had been a different constellation.

Whitten nodded. "The first year I was down here I must have spent six nights a week trying to locate the damn thing. For the next sixteen I've refused to recognize its existence. It's a washout when you *do* find it anyhow."

The conversation had somehow veered to Peruvian policemen.

"Either of you ever been in jail?" asked Whitten suddenly. A bit surprised, we both assured him that the traffic court had thus far been our nearest approach to the hoosegow.

"I have," he said meditatively. "In Ecuador. It was lots of fun too, except for the lice. They always treat political prisoners fine, because they figure they haven't got long to live anyway."

Whitten looked neither like a Trotskyist propagandist nor an E. Phillips Oppenheim spy. We asked for details.

"Well, I'm not sure that I've got it all straight yet," he said. "About two years ago a chap I know up at Cerro de Pasco and I decided to take a vacation. We chartered a little launch and cruised up to the Cocos Islands, off the Coast of Ecuador. For some reason—I don't know why yet—we had an American flag in the boat, and when we pitched camp on one of the uninhabited little islands we raised it over our tent. No particular reason; it just seemed like a good idea at the time.

"As it turned out, though, it wasn't such a good idea. The next morning we woke up and found the whole Ecuadorian navy parked on the beach and pointing guns at us. They told us we'd have to go back to Guayaquil with them and go to jail. And we did. It took the American consul three weeks to get us out. Seems the boys thought we were the U. S. Marines trying to grab off a few Cocos for Uncle Sam."

*Lord speaking:* Ever get lonesome, Whit?

*Whitten:* Sure—sometimes.

**Lord:** Boy—I sure would. 'Way the hell off from everything, tucked away behind these mountains with a bunch of spiiks.

**Whitten:** The spiiks are all right. When they wash.

**Lord:** It must be a funny life. All kinds of things could be going on back home, and you wouldn't know a damn thing about it.

**Ullman:** Do you ever see the American papers?

**Whitten:** Not often. They're three weeks old when they get here, and if they come by plane they cost almost a buck.

**Lord:** I'll bet there're times you get kind of homesick; wished you knew what was going on.

**Whitten:** Once in a while.

**Ullman:** If you'd like me to send you some papers from Lima—

**Whitten:** No—thanks just the same. I get along all right.

**Ullman:** Or if there's any information you want—

**Whitten:** Say, come to think of it, there is. Maybe you can help me out.

**Lord and Ullman (leaning forward):** Sure. What?

**Whitten:** I've got a bet with the Chink down at the store. He says Ross is sure to beat Canzoneri tonight at the Garden, and I say he's nuts. How are you boys betting?

We traveled all the way from Tarma back to Chosica by *collectiva* and by the time we arrived, after seven hours' steady going, were punch-drunk from curves, if not *soroche*. The roads from Oroya down, which in its new macadamized form has been open to traffic for less than a year, is a feat of engineering comparable to the Central Railroad itself. For most of its course it follows the line of the tracks closely, but at certain points soars or dips a thousand feet above or below it. Its chief disadvantage in comparison with the railroad is in its curves. A train, by virtue of its size, needs space and sweep to round a corner; an automobile does not. Seven hours of hurtling from one side of the car to the other as it swings around five hundred hairpin turns are wearing on even the staunchest of anatomies.

The next day I left Chosica and joined Herman at The Bolívar in Lima. We had what seemed like a thousand things to do before setting out on our junket and five days in which to do them—five days which in point of fact added up to little more than one, for Lima had, in our absence, adopted its summer schedule of business hours: 9 to 12 A.M.; 5 to 7 P.M. Between noon and five the march of progress—as well as our frenzied preparations—came to a daily halt. You took your siesta and liked it, or you stamped the floor and didn't like it. But you didn't get anything done.

There was our equipment to buy—boots, breeches, ponchos, duffelbags, tinned foods, whisky, cigarettes, knives, blankets, mosquito-netting, what not. Herman, being on an expense account, felt that the Automatic Button Company would not want their star salesman to travel in shabby style, and his outfit, when complete, was undoubtedly the most stupendous assembled for an expedition since Byrd visited Antarctica. Unfortunately, having no sponsor myself (outside of the Society for the Promotion of More and Worse Travel-Books, which is insolvent) I was, perforce, a bit more conservative in my purchases; but between us we made a brave show and warmed the hearts of many of Lima's shopkeepers.

After equipment there were the inevitable "Papers." The identification cards we possessed were valid only for Lima and environs, and it was necessary to secure new ones for the *montaña*, the Ucayali, Iquitos, *unsowweiter*. It sounded difficult, but was remarkably easy. A day after making application to the police I was the proud possessor of a document stating that "Gems Olin" had a week previously sailed from Cuzco on a Grace Line steamship, bound overland for Brazil. Coupled with my Brazilian visa, which still stated that I would enter that country through Rio de Janeiro, this made an impressive "Carnet d'Identificacion." I might be attacked by Indians, swallowed by a crocodile or get a stomach-ache from unripe bananas, but at least my "Papers" were accurate and in order.

Then there was a veritable welter of lesser chores—laundry,

city-clothing to be sent home, cashing express checks, repairing cameras, letters, cables. (You can be quite certain that any writer who speaks of the sweet indolence of tropical life is not possessed of a family who expect detailed weekly tidings.) In the midst of it all I indulged in a wild, but attractive, extravagance: I telephoned Ruth in New York. The connection was excellent, the conversation stumbling but exciting, the allotted three minutes (overtime and I would have joined the beach-combers) brutally short. The after-effects were bad, and I was homesick, or rather Ruth-sick, with a vengeance. To have her brought momentarily so near, then snatched away again six thousand miles. . . .

Night-time most certainly did not bring solace, but at least it brought amusement. Directly across the street from my room in The Bolívar was an establishment of ill repute but flourishing trade, and the girls, unlike most Latins, apparently doted on fresh air—particularly when engaged in the active conduct of their trade. All night long the windows were open, and business went on with a fine disregard of Lima's official working hours. Between customers the girls would come to their balconies, smoke cigarettes, and frequently favor me with a cordial come-hither. It was a bit disconcerting while one was in the midst of an airmail letter to one's grandmother.

Prostitution in Peru, as in most Latin countries, is considerably different from the institution as we know it in the United States. It is both more and less commercial—more because it is legal and therefore more highly organized; less because the profession has developed traditions and standards of conduct which make the sub-equatorial *muchacha* a far more human and companionable creature than the familiar five-dollars-in-advance, extra-for-overtime strumpet of the north. To be sure, the prostitute's Social Register listing is no higher in Lima than elsewhere; but she is at least a member of a recognized trade and is vouchsafed a certain degree of protection and security. She is not a criminal and an outcast in the sense that her North American sister is, and she is never subjected to the furtive, hole-in-the-wall exist-

ence to which our prostitutes are inevitably doomed. The brothels are licensed, each inmate must undergo regular examinations, and she is strictly forbidden to solicit on the streets. During my ten weeks in Peru—and during them I managed to get into some of its odd and unsavory corners—I was not once accosted by a woman.

Through Herman I had been making the acquaintance of a third class of gringos in Lima, distinct from the tourists and the permanent residents: namely, the commercial travelers. The United States, accustomed for years to a home market capable of consuming all it produces, has lagged far behind the other great nations of the world in the development of its export trade, and its depression-born crop of South American salesmen, far from their usual Atlantic Seaboard or Mississippi Valley haunts, are woefully handicapped when they find themselves in competition with the experienced, cosmopolitan representatives of British and German commercial houses. For the most part the Yankee *commerciantes* I met in Lima were a friendly, but baffled and homesick, lot. Astonishingly few of them spoke Spanish (they transacted their business through interpreters), and with few exceptions their interest in Peru and Peruvians was strictly limited to what they could sell them. One of the exceptions was a woman, Yvonne Aubert by name, who owned a small Madison Avenue dress shop in New York and was touring South America with a line of ready-to-wear women's clothes. She spoke Spanish perfectly, had a vivid interest in new people and scenes, and had visited many of the more remote corners of the continent, selling apparel to the wives of planters, mining engineers and other isolated gringos. As far as she knew, she said, she was the only salesperson of her kind on the west coast. A Madison Avenue dress—even last year's model—was something of an event, say, in Huancayo, Peru, or Potosí, Bolivia, and so far she had enjoyed both a cordial reception and good business wherever she went.

It was among the salesmen at The Bolívar that I first heard of the *askimark*. I could tell at once, from the tone of voice used in referring to it, that it was something unpleasant and sinister,

but for the first day or so I hadn't the least idea whether it was a tropical disease, a Communist leader, or cockroaches. Finally I inquired and was enlightened. The *askimark* is a note issued by the German government for the use of German commercial houses in foreign trade, and ever since its origin it has been a thorn in the side of practically all other nations. The *askimark* differs from the *reichsmark* in that it is not a unit of currency, but a unit of credit. Its function in foreign trade is to obviate the necessity of money passing back and forth from one country to another. If a merchant in a nation recognizing the *askimark* sells merchandise to a German firm, he is not paid in cash, but receives credit in *askimarks*; if he buys merchandise, he is debited in *askimarks*. Thus unencumbered by the complexities of money-exchange and cash transfers, Germany is able to undersell the world-market in most commodities by a sizable margin and also to pay higher prices for what it buys. Virtually all the South American republics make wide use of the *askimark*, and as a result Germany's trade with them has increased enormously. The gamble the other nation must take, of course, is that Germany's credit remains good; if she should go to war or undergo a radical change in government the *askimark* would be worthless. But meanwhile that twenty percent surplus on sales and twenty percent discount on purchases looks pretty good to the Latin-American merchant. The American and English *commerciente* is not happy about it at all.

Herman and I, however, were not long in being confronted by a far more serious menace than the *askimark*. His name was Enrico Sims, half-English, half-Peruvian in nationality, but all-wool Peruvian in mind and temperament. He was a polished gentleman, a delightful companion, and the best reason I know why the United States should immediately declare war on the whole of South America.

It all began in The Bolívar lobby on the first day after our return to Lima. Herman had an airmail letter from the Automatic Button Company, bestowing its official blessing upon his

Pichis-Amazon venture, and in celebration thereof was conducting a one-man rodeo among the *pisco-sours*. Presently a distinguished-looking gentleman approached.

"Señor Lord," he said, and bowed.

"What-ho, Señor Sims!" replied the rodeo. "Jim—I want you to meet *mi amigo buenissimo*. I've only known him a week, but he's the swellest guy in Peru!"

By the end of the afternoon my vote for the swellest guy in Peru would have duplicated Herman's. Señor Sims, it developed, was the former police-chief of Callao, but pro-tem a gentleman of leisure, and he appeared to have no other interest in life save to make himself agreeable and helpful to us. He went shopping with us for our equipment, ferreted out the articles we wanted, haggled for us with the shopkeepers. He accompanied us to the police-station, gave orders like a fascist dictator, and had our "Papers" for us in no time flat. He was cheery, omniscient, indefatigable, and in our round of chores must have saved us a good five hours and twenty dollars. By the time we were back among the palms and *piscos* of The Bolívar, he had assumed in my eyes the aspect of a superman.

"Where was it you said you were going?" he inquired.

"To Iquitos. By the Pichis Trail."

"The Pichis, did you say?"

"*Como no?*"

"But it's ridiculous, impossible, out of the question!"

"Wh-what do you mean?" we ventured timidly.

"In the first place, it's suicidal. Mud up to the neck—mosquitoes by the million—snakes—no shelters—no anything—"

"But—er—the government sends the mail by the Pichis Trail, doesn't it?"

"The government—bah! Their mail contracts are all graft. Someone has a brother or a cousin—" Then, wheeling on Herman, "In the second place, Señor Lord, you search for shells, do you not?"

"Uh-huh," feebly.

"There are *no* shells on the Pichis Trail, *none* in the Pichis

River, *none* in the Pachitea River, *none* in the Ucayali River—anywhere along that route!”

“But I’d heard—” began Herman.

“Heard, nothing! My dear chap, I have spent twenty years of my life in the Peruvian *montaña*, and I know! If it is shells you want—if it is a fine, pleasurable trip you want—” sudden inspiration shone in his eyes—“I shall be back in five minutes. Wait here!”

We were far too paralyzed to do anything else. We had scarcely moved a muscle when he returned accompanied by a ponderous and perspiring old gentleman.

“My cousin, Señor Hernandez,” he said. Then to Hernandez: “Tell them about the Via Pichis.”

“It is impassable, señors. You would lose your lives.”

“Are there shells there?”

“Absolutely none.”

Sims turned to us with a gesture. “Gentlemen, my cousin owns a large hacienda on the Alto Ucayali River, near its confluence with the Tambo River. There are hundreds of thousands of shells in the lakes there, and a foreman with assistants who will be at your service in finding and collecting them. The journey there is over excellent and interesting trails, and from the hacienda there is a daily boat to Iquitos. Your problem is solved!”

“But we know nothing of the route.”

“I shall map it all for you.”

“But we wouldn’t know whom to look for or—”

“I shall give you letters.”

“But—”

He had all the answers.

Through dinner, through the evening, until well past midnight the discussion continued. And the more Sims and Hernandez talked, the more persuasive were their arguments. True, much of what they said about the Pichis Trail contradicted the information I had previously been given, but, after all, neither Hope Morris, Lembke nor Whitten, my principal authorities, had actually been over the route for several years past. These

two men obviously knew the country under discussion, they made frequent trips to their hacienda and to Iquitos, and there could be no possible ulterior motive in their advice, other than the legitimate one of interesting Herman in the shells on their property.

When they finally left we were in a quandary. It was the twenty-second of January—four days before the mail left Tarma for the Pichis—and if we were going with it we should already have wired Deludighi about the mules. We decided to wait overnight.

Sims arrived while we were breakfasting next morning—with maps, with schedules, with helpful suggestions. We told him about the required four-day notice to the mail contractor at Tarma.

"Forget it," he said, and proceeded forthwith to map out our new route in detail. We would leave Lima on such-and-such a train, pick up our mules at such-and-such a place, follow this trail, dine at that monastery, find our canoes waiting for us at a particular spot on the River Tambo. At the hacienda the foreman and his assistants would provide us with food and shelter and conduct Herman in his search for shells. It was all as detailed and complete as a Cook's Tour.

Questions and answers for another two hours. Indecision—more questions and answers—more indecision. Finally the shells decided the day. Herman, after all, was in South America for the express purpose of looking for them, and here was the first definite information he had as to their whereabouts in the Peruvian interior.

"I ought to go after them, Jim," he said. "How about it?"

I had planned for a long time on the Pichis, and it was hard to give it up. But the weight of evidence seemed all against it.

"All right," I answered.

Señor Sims beamed upon us. The next morning, he said, he would bring us letters of introduction to everyone along the way: the mayors of the towns, the prefects, the sub-prefects, the commandantes, and the foreman of the hacienda. We shook hands, we celebrated over a round of drinks, and we again went

shopping under our mentor's helpful surveillance. And we did not send the wire to Tarma.

I shall set down the last episode of this story without attempt at explanation or interpretation. Here it is, and I solemnly swear to its authenticity. Anyone who wishes to may go on from there.

The next morning, as per his promise, Sims appeared at the hotel. We asked if he had the letters of introduction. He explained he had not had time to write them the night before, but would do so immediately, and, borrowing Herman's typewriter, he set to work. Occasionally he interrupted his typing with a pleasantry. He was in his usual friendly, jovial humor.

After perhaps ten minutes he pulled the paper from the machine, signed it carefully, put it in an envelope and handed it to me with a smile.

"Who's it to?" I asked.

"You," he said.

I opened it and read:

"Srs. Herman Lord & James Ullman,

"Hotel Bolívar, Lima, Peru.

"SEÑORS:

"After careful consideration I would recommend a slight change in your plans. I find, upon discussion with my cousin, Señor Hernandez, that he does not own the hacienda of which we spoke, but once knew some people who owned one in that vicinity. Unfortunately he has forgotten their names. Also, it seems that the route to the hacienda, which we discussed, has been abandoned for several years and is not passable.

"I therefore suggest that you make your trip to Iquitos by way of the Pichis Trail. This is a most attractive route, easy to traverse and with many shells to be found along . . ."

The epilogue to this fantasy is that I phoned Whitten and received his assurance that, although we were two days late in giving notification, the mules would be ready for us. This is the sole reason why the next chapter of "The Other Side of the Mountain" is laid on the Pichis Trail, and not in Lima's Homicide Court.

## VI

### THE BIG PUSH

THE BELATED, but thunderous, collapse of the House That Sims Built left us with a myriad of *negociaciones* still to be tackled in Lima and Tarma and precious little time in which to do the tackling. We decided to split the chores. Herman would remain in Lima until the last minute, palavering with banks, laundresses and similar institutions. I would go up to Tarma at once to purchase necessary equipment and make sure that mules, mail-train and Pichis Trail actually did exist. After the experience we had just encountered we were trusting nobody and nothing except our own eyes and ears.

The night before departure was a jumble of duffelbags, misplaced clothing, 'phone calls, whisky-sodas and farewells. Jerry Blanchard gave me his oilskin tobacco-pouch for my cash and express checks, to ward off bankruptcy when my mule fell in his daily river. Jack Fisher appeared with a perfumed bottle of Flit and presented it with the compliments of the International Petroleum Corporation and himself. Hope Morris and Ted Waters dropped in with Sally in tow. That stout mountaineer had developed a bothersome case of "Andes feet" on our joint excursions and had been brought to the Lima *quinta* to recuperate in grassy luxury. But she bore me no ill will and would, I believe, have liked nothing better than a farewell tear up Cerro San Cristobal.

There were good-bys, exchanges of addresses, letters of introduction—and whiskys. It was strange—and at parting a little difficult—to realize suddenly how intimate I had become with these people who, with the exception of Jerry, I had known for less than a month. I had been very much alone when I came among them, and they had been kind and friendly to me. In retrospect

I recall the weeks I spent among them in Lima and Chosica as among the most pleasant of my life.

The following morning, with an assortment of baggage of which a Peruvian peddler would have been proud, I boarded the Central at Desamparados and took the fabulous joyride to Oroya for the last time. By nightfall I was again established in Tarma's Bolívar and recounting to Nat Whitten the saga of Sims and Hernandez.

"I don't think anyone's been through that way for ten years," said Nat. "There's a rumor that Colonel Fawcett and Judge Crater are up in there somewhere playing pinochle. And say, that one about the daily boat from the hacienda is pretty good, too. There's not a mile-stretch of navigable water anywhere near it—just one damn cataract after another. Oh, yeah, you boys would have had swell pickings on that little outing."

The next day, after breakfast, he produced a small map on which he had been working.

"Here's the Pichis, more or less," he said, and together we went over our prospective route and plans.

To understand the nature of the Pichis Trail and the reason for its existence it is necessary to know a little of the geography and climate of Peru. The country is divided into three roughly parallel belts, which extend from northwest to southeast along its entire length and are completely different, one from the other, in almost every respect. Along the Pacific lies the narrow, rainless coastal plain, on which Lima and most of the nation's other large cities are located. East of this rises the *sierra*, or high ranges, of the central Andes. In the latitude of Lima and Tarma, where the Central Railroad crosses them, the mountains reach their narrowest point. Farther north and farther south they branch out from the one principal chain into three distinct, parallel ranges, known, respectively, as the Cordillera Occidental, the Cordillera Central and the Cordillera Oriental. Whether in one or three chains, however, the entire mountainous region is called the *sierra* and the lofty plateaus between the crests the *puno* or *altiplano*. The entire region east of the Andes is known as the



OUR HABITATION ENFORCED AT PUEBLO PARDO



RAPID TRANSIT NEAR LA MERCED



*montaña*—a confusing name to the uninitiated, in that it has nothing to do with mountains, but is the term for the vast tropical jungles of interior Peru. The *montaña* contains well over two-thirds of the area of the country, but less than one-tenth of its population and a negligible fraction of its commerce and industry.

No railroads or highways anywhere connect the *sierra* and the *montaña*. The only overland communication between the two regions are mule-trails, of which there are perhaps a half-dozen generally recognized; and among these trails the shortest, most centrally located and most famous is the Pichis. Situated almost exactly in the geographical center of Peru, its western end is in the Chanchamayo Valley, just below Tarma on the eastern slopes of the Andes. Thence it winds in a northeasterly direction through the foothills down into the jungle, terminating after a little over a hundred miles at Puerto Yessup on the Pichis River. The Pichis River is an affluent of the Pachitea, which in turn is an affluent of the Ucayali, the great inland waterway of the *montaña*, which flows north for a thousand miles to Iquitos and the Amazon.

For years this route—wild and undeveloped though it is—has been the principal link between the Peruvian East and the Peruvian West, and it remains so today, in spite of the recent establishment of a weekly plane service from the *sierra* to Iquitos. Along it go the fortnightly mail caravans of the Peruvian government, and for their convenience, as well as that of the other infrequent travelers, several primitive inns, or *tambos*, have been established along the trail. Originally operated by the government itself, they are now maintained by the individual families who inhabit them. Each family receives a small yearly subsidy for operating its *tambo*, the prices charged are fixed by the government, and the accommodation of travelers is compulsory. At the time of our trip there were seven *tambos* operating, spaced at intervals of from fifteen to twenty miles along the trail.

The mail-train, Whitten said, would probably spend one night at each *tambo*, and the trip to Puerto Yessup would therefore

require one week. From Yessup the remainder of the journey to Iquitos would be by the rivers, first by canoe, then by steam-launch. The total time to our objective should be about three weeks, the total cost about seventy-five American dollars. At his suggestion I changed a good part of my paper money into silver. It was safer, he pointed out, from the ravages of flood and mud, and, in addition, the keepers of the *tambos* and the other scattered settlers along the way seldom encountered paper money and as often as not would refuse to accept it. On his advice too, I laid in a small supply of tinned foods; the *tambos*, apparently, had a way of running out of supplies at critical moments and we would be well beyond the world of the corner grocery store. By the time evening arrived, and, with it, Herman on the *collectiva* from Oroya, I had our geography, finances and canned sardines well in hand, and we were ready for whatever the perilous Pichis had to offer. Except, of course, that I'd forgotten the toilet paper.

We were to make the first lap of the trip—to La Merced, in the Chanchamayo Valley—in the mail-contractor's car. Deludighi had said he would pick us up at the hotel at two in the afternoon; we were therefore dressed, packed, and ready before breakfast. This at least gave us the opportunity to spend the morning parading our new clothes and equipment without benefit of a mud-coating—the last time we would be privileged to do so for some time to come. Also it unfortunately provided me time to pick through the morning newspaper, item No. 1 of which was the following:

#### ACCIDENTE DE TRAFICO EN HUANCAYO— PERECEN 12 PERSONAS

LIMA—25 UP—*Ayer, en Huancayo, resultaron 12 muertos y 11 heridos cuando un camion que conducia 23 psajeros de la colonia Perene se precipito en un abismo a cuatro kilometros de la Merced.*

For some time past—in fact, even before leaving New York—I had been hearing reports about the Chanchamayo Road. It was the most dangerous in the world. It was suicidal. It was the scene of more fatalities than Flanders Fields. All this homicidal chit-chat at a comfortable distance was one thing. But to be informed that twelve people were killed yesterday doing what you are going to do today is another story. That "*abismo a cuatro kilometros de la Merced*" was a bit hard to dismiss from the mind as the time drew near for us to set out for it.

Shortly after lunch Deludighi, accompanied by his wife, came by in his car, and by two-thirty we had received our good friend Whitten's blessing and were off. Our road led out of Tarma toward the northeast, between the towering aisles of eucalyptus, and for the first half-hour conducted itself in conservative fashion. Presently, however, the gradual downhill slope began to drop away more rapidly before us, the green hills on either side closed in, and the road twisted and writhed. From this point on to La Merced only one-way traffic is permitted—eastbound and westbound on alternate days. Today, a wayside sign informed us, it was eastbound only. At least we would not have to worry about berserker trucks or drunken college boys roaring up at us from the other end.

For perhaps five miles we advanced along the side of a deep, wooded canyon—the route of the Chanchamayo River as it drops from the Andes to the jungle. At Tarma we had been at a ten-thousand-foot elevation; at La Merced, a scant thirty miles distant, we would be at only two thousand feet, and our road, in consequence, had plenty of descending to do. But however dizzyingly we dropped, the river below dropped away farther, with the result that the cliffs below us had soon grown from a height of some two hundred feet to over a thousand. The road, of loose-surfaced dirt and at no place more than eight feet in width, seemed to cling to the wall of the gorge like a living organism.

Deludighi's car had two qualities which are good in a bottle of whisky, but bad in an auto on a mountain—it was big and it was old. Every time we rounded a sharp curve, which was sixty

times a minute, the rear end of the car, in which Herman and I sat, appeared to lose all contact with the road and hang suspended in space above an abyss. And every time we were on a steep down grade—which was always—the welkin shook with the shrieking of the brakes. From the sudden jerks and slides in which we were indulging the uncomfortable suspicion persisted that, canine-like, their bark was worse than their bite.

After a particularly outrageous series of hairpin turns and scenic-railway loops we finally descended to the level of the river. We relaxed for the first time in an hour, but before we had advanced a quarter of a mile the river fell away again in a series of stupendous waterfalls, and we were left clinging to the side of a precipice fifteen hundred feet above. Directly before us the canyon took a sharp turn to the left, and on the mountain side opposite we could see six parallel levels of the road ahead, one directly below the other, over which we must go before again reaching the valley bottom and the river. Horizontal distance to be covered—one mile. Vertical distance—fifteen hundred feet.

At this point of the journey a new menace was introduced. Señora Deludighi had thus far been a model passenger, but now suddenly began to exercise the immemorial wifely prerogative of telling her husband how to drive. Deludighi, not to be out-done, promptly exercised the immemorial husbandly prerogative of resenting it. As charter members of the Married Motorists' Protective Association both Herman and I sympathized with his plight. But a Latin, unfortunately, is not so constructed that he can express emotion with the voice alone. For the next half-hour, over the most hair-raising stretch of road I have encountered anywhere in the world, Deludighi drove the car with one hand and waved the other angrily at his wife. There was only one interruption. Suddenly the arguing ceased, and I saw with horror that both of them were looking back over their shoulders while the car coasted on in its own sweet way. They explained pleasantly that we were near the scene of yesterday's disaster and that they were looking around for the wreckage. I honestly believe both Herman and I would have jumped from the car if there had

been any place to jump to short of fifteen hundred feet below.

I cannot venture to say whether it was God in person, but someone pretty influential in cosmic circles was on "our side" during our zigzag descent of that mountain. For, to our astonishment, we eventually reached the bottom by the land—not the air—route and found ourselves again beside the swirling river. This time we stayed there. For the past hour our eyes—when they were open—had been concerned exclusively with curves, drops, and the fragile geometry that separated us from our ancestors. Now we suddenly observed the startling change which nature had undergone during our descent. At the altitude of Tarma the vegetation had been that of the temperate zones. Now we were in the tropics. The hills about us had assumed softer contours, and the trees and plants which blanketed them were lush and wildly variegated. Ferns were everywhere, and lofty, leaning palms, and the hanging, twining lianas, or creeper-vines, of the jungle. Piled high above us, their enormous weight clinging precariously to the steep slopes, they had the appearance of hanging gardens, suspended tier on tier to the very summits of the hills.

As the vegetation had changed, so too had the air. Twenty miles back it had been cool and crisp; here it was warm and damp. Indeed, it seemed suddenly as if the whole world about us were sweating forth the earth's internal moisture. In the distance great clouds of steam arose from the forests and hung motionless above them, like a veil. From every slope a dozen streams rushed downward to the river below, and whenever we passed beneath overhanging rocks or trees the water beat upon the roof of the car like rain. All nature was banded together with the single purpose of feeding this little Chanchamayo River—a tributary of a tributary of a tributary of a tributary of the Amazon. Trying to grasp the picture of a thousand such streams in a thousand other tropical valleys across half a continent, each of them growing and swelling as they sucked out the moisture from the earth, we felt for the first time an intimation of the

vastness and vitality of the great river system into whose world we were beginning to penetrate.

Two hours after leaving Tarma we passed through the village of San Ramon, situated at the point where the canyon we had been following finally widens out into the Chanchamayo Valley. Here is the western terminus of the Peruvian government's airline to Iquitos. The small planes employed in the weekly service lack sufficient climbing-power to surmount the 20,000 foot altitudes of the Andean peaks, and the westernmost limit of their flight has therefore been set at this point in the eastern foothills. Between Lima and San Ramon the air-traveler must proceed by train and car, as did we. A plane was taxiing about the landing field as we went by. It was scheduled to leave the following morning, and in two days its passengers and mail would have completed the journey on which we were about to spend three weeks.

The remainder of our way to La Merced lay through fertile plantations of sugar, bananas, coffee and cotton—the heart of the Chanchamayo, which is probably the most productive agricultural area of all Peru. Presently we rolled down the dusty main street of the town, past the enormous, new storage shed which serves the entire surrounding district as market and shipping center, and up to the door of our home-for-the-night. This time it was not The Bolívar, but the Hotel Roca. It was perhaps not the cleanest establishment in the world, and it had its full complement of mosquitoes; but at least it did not feature two-inch turns and thousand-foot drops.

The Peruvian provincial hotel is an institution hardly calculated to warm the heart of the traveler accustomed to Ritzes, or even Statlers, and many and loud are the cries of anguish I have heard from gringos who have suffered in them—including myself. It is not that the accommodations are primitive, the furniture rudimentary, the plumbing non-existent (one does not look for luxury in the backwoods), but that they are dirty, frowsy and bug-ridden—conditions that with a little care and energy are so easily rectifiable. But nothing is ever done about it, and the

classic answer to the fastidious traveler's complaint is still that made several years ago to an outraged gringo by a hotel keeper in Huancayo. The American had been berating him for keeping the sleeping quarters in filthy condition and feeding the guests on slops.

"You know damn well you could keep the place clean if you tried," he said angrily. "And you could serve decently cooked food just as cheaply as this garbage. Why the hell don't you?"

"Sí, señor," the proprietor replied. "That is quite true. But why should I bother? No one will pay their bills anyhow."

Later in the trip we reached a point of proficiency where we could lace up our knee-boots in less than ten minutes. At this stage of the game, however, it was still something of a major operation, and the morning was well along before we were out and about in full Daniel Boone regalia.

There was no hurry, however. Deludighi was sending out a truck in the afternoon that would go down the Chanchamayo Road as far as a village called Punizas, where the Pichis Trail began. It would be carrying supplies for the mail-train, which would not set out from there until the next day, and it had been decided that we would go with it and thus save ourselves an extra day on mule-back. There was some discussion among the town's authorities as to whether the road would be passable for the truck, but it was pointed out that, since it had not rained during the past few days, there was at least a fifty-fifty chance. That's better-than-average odds when a Peruvian sets out for somewhere in a car.

For once I was rather glad of the delay. In the course of our one-day descent from Tarma's forty-degree temperature to La Merced's eighty I had acquired a whopping head-cold, and the knowledge that we were in the heart of Peru's malarial district did not add comfort to my sneezing. The mosquitoes were everywhere, and not at all reticent in welcoming visitors to town; and in the streets we observed many people whose sallow faces unmistakably bore the imprint of the fever. I spent the morning

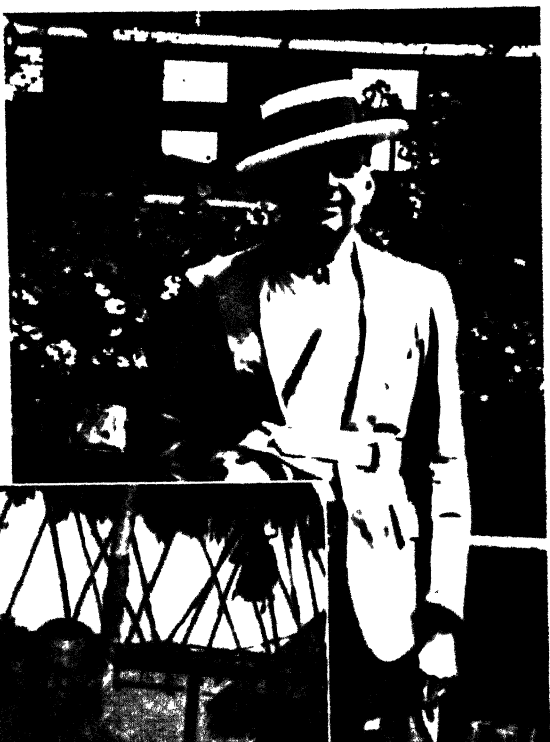
looking through a book on tropical medicine which I had brought with me; and with every alternate page I defiantly swallowed a quinine pill, hoped for the best, and expected the worst. But apparently my number was not up. I almost broke my back sneezing, but that was all.

As a matter of fact, malaria by no means deserves the epithet of "worst" in the roster of tropical diseases. Far and away the most common (approximately half the inhabitants of equatorial South America are or have been infected) it is seldom any longer fatal. In Brazil and eastern Peru the malaria mortality has fallen from about thirty-three per thousand population in 1875 to less than two per thousand at the present time; and although the chances are better than even that the itinerant gringo will contract the disease, they are very slight that it will be dangerous or even particularly distressing, especially if he is well supplied with quinine.

The other ailments, however, for which Herman and I were eligible as we approached Amazonia were numerous and horrendous. We had been immunized against smallpox and typhoid by vaccination and inoculation, and yellow fever is no longer the scourge it once was in tropical America, but my morning's reading in *La Merced* imparted the cheering assurance that there were left some thirty assorted infectious diseases we could run afoul of without half trying. There were, among others, dysentery, both amebic and bacillary, rat-bite fever, infectious jaundice, yaws, dengue, hookworm, leprosy, an extremely common skin disease bearing the frightening name of *Leishmaniasis*, and a whole list of special fevers peculiar to certain localities and usually named after them. Among these, incidentally, were an *Oroya* fever and a *Verrugas* fever (usually called *Verruga Peruana*), but they had both been almost completely stamped out by the time of my visit to their respective homes.

Beyond a doubt the most pernicious and least controlled disease with which tropical South America is cursed at the present time is hookworm. It is caused by tiny worms which penetrate the skin of the feet from the soil, and in regions of hot tempera-

DANIEL  
BOONE  
ROVER  
MERRIWELL-  
QUIXOTE



—AND HIS  
BIOGRAPHER



tures and heavy rainfall its incidence is seldom less than sixty percent and sometimes as high as ninety-five percent of the entire population. Seldom directly fatal, its ravages are none the less terrible. In children it manifests itself in anemia, stunting of growth and the grotesquely distended belly so frequently seen in South American and African communities; in adults it less often produces outward deformity, but induces physical and mental sluggishness and a general impairment of vital functions. Its prevalence is much greater among the poorer natives, who go barefoot, than among the well-shod upper-class residents and visiting outlanders. A dozen times during our passage through Amazonia we were warned by our more experienced fellow-travelers not to walk barefoot on the earth—not even for a distance of a few yards from river bank to water when taking a swim. We had scarcely imagined in advance that bedroom slippers would be an important part of our wardrobe in Peru's *montaña*, but they were.

Most of the natives we encountered unfortunately knew little or nothing about hookworm, but they were very much alive to the dangers of another, and most loathsome disease. Immediately upon entering into Amazonia we noticed that the native men, when bathing in the jungle rivers, invariably protected their genitals with crude coverings of cloth or tightly woven grass. Modesty, obviously, had nothing to do with the case, and we soon discovered that the sole reason for covering themselves was protection against a species of tiny worm which infests the rivers and has the habit of penetrating the human penis for the purpose of laying its eggs. The effects, as it requires no great imagination to infer, are horrible in the extreme, and the Indians and half-breeds we encountered along the Pichis Trails and the Amazon tributaries feared the infection as they feared no other plague of nature. They had only varying local names for it, but almost all agreed that the tiny worms were disseminated by snails, and this would probably indicate that it either is, or is closely related to, the disease known to medical science as schistosomiasis. But, whether schistosomiasis or something equally unpronounceable in

Indian dialect, it was obviously something to give as wide a berth as possible, and on the few occasions Herman and I swam in the jungle rivers we took the greatest precautions. I'm afraid it would not do to state baldly what we used as protection; they were objects, I may say, that were originally manufactured for a far different purpose.

Extensive medical work, therapeutic and educational, has been carried out in tropical South America in recent years, both by government commissions and by the International Health Board of the Rockefeller Foundation. Certain diseases which formerly ravaged the region have been almost exterminated; others, like malaria, are at least being brought under control; and the Rockefeller scientists are now turning their attention particularly toward the ubiquitous scourge of hookworm. Amazonia at the present time is by no means the malignantly unhealthy area that it was in the early years of its exploration and settlement. But it is still no place for a hypochondriac—especially if he possesses a medical book with vivid descriptions of symptoms.

Nothing worse, however, than a complete depletion of handkerchiefs happened to me in La Merced, and as we were finishing lunch the truck pulled up in front of the hotel. The proprietress (at the last minute she turned out to be a Frenchwoman) boomed orders in various directions, and presently two girls in their 'teens appeared from upstairs carrying our heavy baggage on their shoulders. To a gringo it is apt to be a disturbing, not to mention somewhat embarrassing, sight to watch a woman or half-grown child struggling with fifty pounds or more of his equipment while he sits by and takes life easy; but in Peru it is the accepted procedure and a custom one simply must grow used to. For us to have carried our luggage ourselves, when there were girls available for the job, would have caused confusion, consternation and the suspicion that we were beachcombers or worse. Boots or no boots, clean-shaven or with three-day beards, we were *los señores*, and *los señores* do not exert themselves when there is anyone else around to do the exerting. It's a system that

is easy on the shoulder muscles but hard on the virile traditions of gringo chivalry.

We followed our baggage into the rear of the truck, and what seemed like half the population of La Merced followed us. After a half-hour of farewells and false starts we were off, bumping out of town on a road that was almost indistinguishable from the surrounding fields. Our average speed on the straightaways was about five miles an hour, but there were not many straightaways. We encountered none of the aerial fandangoes of the preceding day's ride, but the road still writhed and twisted back upon itself and every few moments we would have to stop while the crowd of *cholos* piled out of the car to remove boulders from our path or cut away fallen trees with their long *machetes*. Many streams crossed our way—powerful young freshets tumbling down from the hills to feed the Chanchamayo. Whenever it encountered them the road, scorning bridges or detours, simply took a deep breath and dove in; and we dove in after.

At one stream we encountered another truck, headed in the opposite direction from ours, which had come to grief halfway across. Its rear wheels, resting on barely submerged gravel, were all right, but the whole front end of the car was practically submerged. The swirling waters rushed across the footboards of the driver's cab and gurgled happily in the motor. The driver himself had repaired to the roof, where he sat in solitude like a marooned sailor. Undaunted, our truck dove in and by the grace of God lurched through to the other side. The marooned driver waved cheerfully to us as we passed and lit a cigarette. Apparently he was waiting for the end of the rainy season.

After another hour of streams, boulders and fallen trees we passed the first habitation we had seen since leaving La Merced—a miserable, tumble-down adobe hut by the roadside. Herman shook his head sadly.

"It's hard to believe," he said, "that there are people in the world who can eat and sleep in a place like that."

Whereupon a man came running down the road toward us, gesturing for the truck to stop. An involved discussion ensued

between him and the driver, with the rest of the truck's population chipping in. Finally we were enlightened.

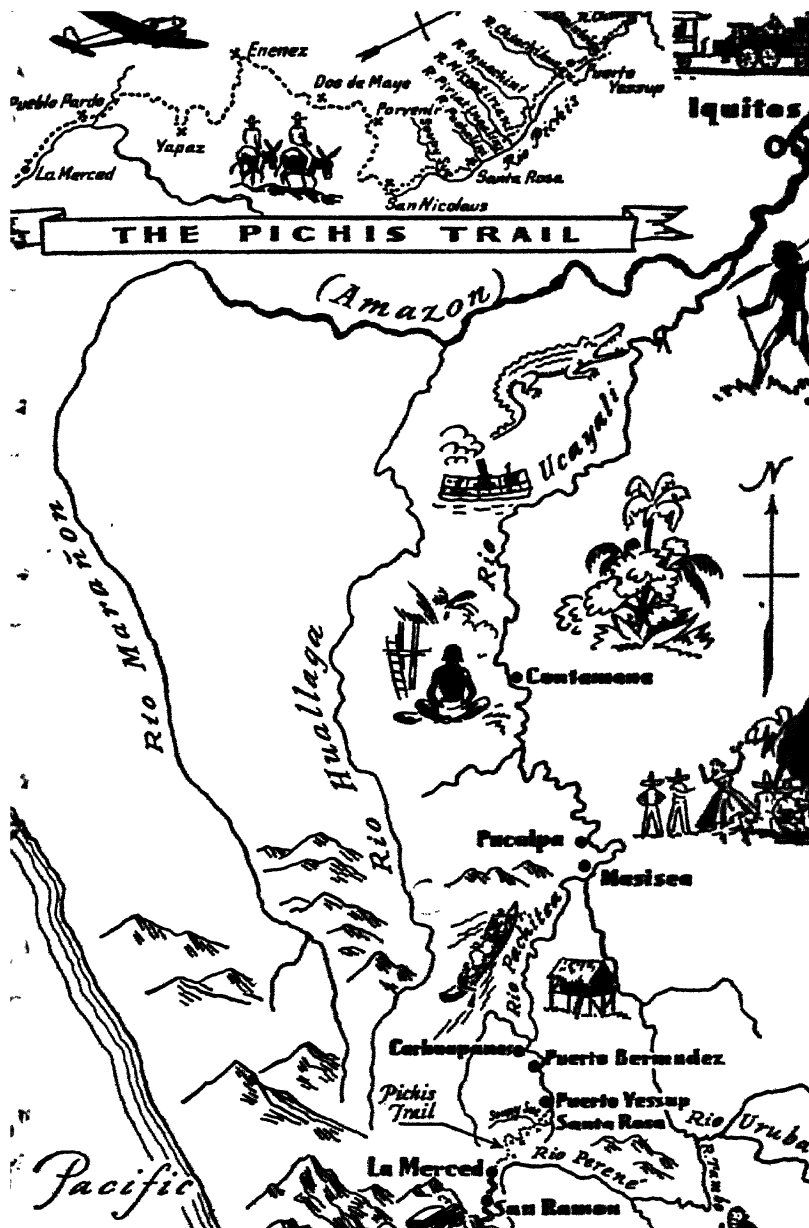
"The river ahead is impassable, señors," explained the driver. "You will spend the night here."

We did, too.

Our emergency home, we discovered, was officially the town of Pueblo Pardo (in rural Peru any structure from a lean-to up is officially a town) and, in spite of its squalor, we acquired a singular affection for it during our eighteen-hour sojourn. In the first place, our hostess was an unusual type of woman to be found in this primitive wilderness. She was obviously a person of some education and breeding and was desperately apologetic for the meagerness and dinginess of her home. She gave us a thoroughly edible dinner, clean bedding to lie upon, and—crowning example of a hostess's thoughtfulness—placed a box across the doorway of our room to keep the hogs out while we slept. We regretted that our combined Spanish was not sufficient to learn from her a little of her background.

After our hostess, the chief attraction of Pueblo Pardo was the scenery. Situated near the point where the Chanchamayo and Poucartambo rivers converge to form the Perene, it commanded from its elevated position a view of all three streams. During the late afternoon we walked a few miles down the road, fording the stream that had blocked our truck's progress, and had an opportunity to see tropical nature at her lavish best. On every side was a wild riot of trees, shrubs, ferns, lianas, creepers. Here and there through the thick undergrowth we could see the bulging trunk of a giant ceiba tree, from which the jungle Indians fashion their dugout canoes. Far above our heads the spreading summit of a palm would stand out, sudden and alone against the sky. And in the distance below the three rivers shone as they wound through the jungle to their meeting place.

The forest was alive with birds, but they were wary of approaching too close to us. Among them, however, I recognized my Peruvian favorite, a flaming-red little chit, always gaudy and



disheveled, which the natives have given the rightest possible name—*poutilla*, "little whore." The insect life beggared numbering or description. On our way back we encountered a colony of sauba ants—the leaf bearers—which I had often heard and read of, but never before seen. Across the road they marched, innumerable thousands of them, each with a shred of leaf ten times his own size aslant above him like a sail. By the roadside the tattered wreckage of a dozen low-growing plants gave evidence of where their burdens came from. On the other side of the road the endless procession disappeared into the undergrowth, and though we beat about for a while we could not find its obscure destination. Incidentally, though we did not know it at the time, we made the acquaintance of other ants than the saubas during our walk. I do not know the entomological name for them. Our name, bestowed some few hours later when we retired, was *genus trouserensis interior*.

Back at Pueblo Pardo a man was waiting for us. He greeted us with "Hello, meester," and having thereby exhausted his English vocabulary proceeded to explain in Spanish that his name was Ignacio Lopez, that he was one of the *arrieros* on the mail-train and had been charged with the care of our mules during the impending trip. The mules, he said, were still somewhere back along the La Merced road. He would be by with them to pick us up at eight the next morning. We presented him with cigarettes and a chocolate-bar to promote friendly international relations, and with another cheery "Hello, meester" he was gone.

In the middle of the night we awoke to find the walls of our room shaking violently.

"An earthquake!" yelled Herman.

Subsequent investigation, however, disclosed that it was only the hogs trying to clamber in over our box in the doorway.

We were awakened by the tinkling of bells on the road: the mules were passing by. There were fifty-nine of them in the mail-train, their backs piled high with canvas sacks, crates, gasoline tins, all manner of freight and equipment. With their meas-

ured, patient pace they plodded by in single file, while the *arrieros*—one to each seven or eight animals—walked between, throwing sticks at lagging backsides and shouting their hoarse cry of "Hula!" At the end of the procession came Lopez with our three mules and a cheery "Hello, meester." With astonishing speed and dexterity he set about roping our cumbersome baggage together and soon had it dizzily, but securely, perched atop the smallest of the three beasts. Meanwhile we set about the important business of becoming acquainted with the other two; after all, they were going to be our pretty intimate companions for the next few days, and it seemed advisable to make as favorable a first impression as possible. They were sturdy animals, somewhat larger than most of the mules we had seen in Peru, and we were relieved to see that they were well fed and without saddle sores. One was male, one female, and a flip of a coin assigned me to the former. There was still the question of names to be bestowed, and after due deliberation we christened them Edward and Wally. Later in the trip Lopez became Baldwin; his chief function in life was to make them behave.

Shortly after eight we left Pueblo Pardo, our hostess and our hogs behind us. Again we forded the swollen stream and followed the road we had traversed on foot the day before. It had rained during the night, and the road's surface was a morass, but the mules plopped patiently through it without a misstep. For perhaps two miles we followed the right bank of the Poucartambo River; then we swung suddenly east and crossed the river by a narrow suspension bridge. On the farther bank the road split, the right fork leading off down the left bank of the Poucartambo to the nearby Perene Colony. This is a large tract of land operated as a hacienda by the Peruvian Corporation (a large English company which also owns the Central Railroad), from which comes much of the best fruit, coffee and sugar of tropical Peru. The place received its designation of "Colony" from the former efforts of the corporation to settle it with homesteaders from England. For a variety of reasons, however—principally Indian resistance and the alcoholic tendencies of the settlers—the project

was a failure, and in recent years the establishment has been run as a private commercial enterprise.

Our route did not pass through the Perene Colony, but forked off to the left into a low range of hills. At about eleven o'clock we came to a solitary hut in a clearing beside the road; this, we discovered, was the town of Punizas, the original destination of our truck on the previous day. Directly beyond it the road tapered off into a trail and the *Via Pichis* officially began.

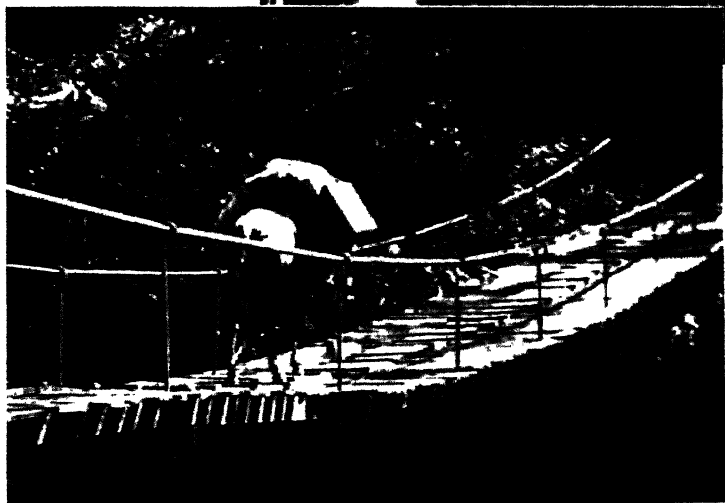
As the forest closed in about us, we began to climb in earnest. The *Pichis* begins near the Poucartambo River at an altitude of only two thousand feet and ends at the *Pichis* River at an altitude of only nine hundred. But in between it crosses an extensive range of low mountains—the easternmost outposts of the Andes—and attains a maximum elevation of over six thousand feet. On this first day we circled the shoulders of one hill after another, usually about halfway up their slopes. Most of the time we were hemmed in closely by the dense vegetation of the forest, but occasionally we would emerge upon an open ridge and have a glimpse of the country, billowing endlessly away before us. No roof, no smoke, no vestige of human life or habitation broke the vast monotony of its green sweep.

The jungle about us was a bedlam of sound, but we saw no animals (except a dead anteater lying on the trail) and but few birds. Insects were legion—all sizes, shapes, colors; on the ground, on the leaves and bark of trees, in the air; humming, buzzing, or clacking. But they seemed disposed to let us pass in peace.

As the day progressed we were learning things about Wally and Edward. Item No. 1 was that there is no point whatever in trying to guide a mule with the reins; nine times out of ten the way he wants to go is the right way, and the tenth time nothing you can do is going to dissuade him anyhow. Item No. 2 was that a saddle can be thoroughly soft and comfortable one hour and covered with spiked knobs the next. From the first day on we regularly alternated walking with riding—usually a half-hour or forty minutes of the former to two hours of the latter.

Throughout the trip the mail-train never stopped for food at

THE LONG  
GREEN TUNNEL  
OF THE  
PICHIS TRAIL



CROSSING THE PUCHELINI RIVER



midday; there were no habitations of any description between the overnight *tambos*, and to stop and prepare our own food would have consumed too much time. It was therefore with more than intellectual curiosity that we arrived, just before sundown, at Tambo Yapaz, our first Pichis hostelry. This establishment, like all the others after it, consisted of two buildings—the dwelling house itself and a shed for loading and unloading the mules and storing the mail. Sometimes it was a little difficult to tell which was which, but we soon adopted the foolproof system of waiting to see which structure the mules headed for and then heading for the other.

A few minutes after arrival at Yapaz the *arrieros* had their animals unburdened, and in a twinkling the landscape was a tangled, waving forest of two hundred and thirty-six legs as the fifty-nine mules simultaneously rolled about on their backs and scratched away their memories of their loads. In the meantime we were making our first acquaintance with two of the major institutions of the Pichis Trail: the Chunchos Indians and the *tambo table d'hôte*—of the Chunchos, more anon. As to the dinner (and a description of the dinner at Yapaz is also an exact description of every other meal we had on the trail)—it consisted of a first course of chicken soup, a second course of chicken and rice, a third course of rice and chicken, and coffee. We made exhaustive inquiries into why the chicken and rice, or rice and chicken, were always split into two courses, but nothing came of them. You got chicken and rice and when you were through with that you again got chicken and rice. That was all there was to it, and you ate it and liked it, or didn't eat it and went hungry.

With, around, in or between all the meals at all the *tambos* was *yucca*. This is a heavy fibrous root, indigenous to Peru's *montaña*, which tastes much like potato and can be prepared in almost as many different forms. Along the Pichis it was usually boiled, and pretty tasteless, but a little went a long way toward filling up the hollow caverns of the stomach. The country through which we passed daily was overflowing with its burden of

luscious tropical fruits—papayas, mangoes, pineapples, oranges, melons—and at each *tambo* we tried to secure some. Our only success, however, was on the last day, when we finally secured a pineapple. What the natives do with the fruits we were never able to discover—feed them to the hogs, probably.

Yapaz hours: dinner at six; to bed at eight. Bed consisted of a straw mattress over which we threw our ponchos and blankets, with a sweater added for pillow. Pajamas consisted of everything we wore during the day except our boots. But I have slept much worse in Sulka's finest.

For most of our journey from Lima to Iquitos we had excellent luck with the weather. We were making it in the heart of the rainy season (which extends from December to May in the Peruvian *montaña*), but, for the most part, the worst we encountered were occasional heavy showers and evening thunderstorms. However, fate—and the Deluge—caught up with us.

It was raining when we arose at six; it was raining when we left Yapaz at seven; and it rained all day. Wearily, unendingly, the mules clopped through the mud—so deep in places that their bellies scraped it as they floundered through; so thick that they would sometimes have to stand still and pull with all their strength to extricate a leg. Pichis mud is like no other mud in the world. Varying with the nature of the soil, it is sometimes brick red and sometimes yellow; it is compounded of equal parts of cream-of-tomato soup, mucilage, and primeval ooze; and it has the tenacity of an octopus. After our prescribed two hours on mule-back we attempted to walk for a way, but had to give it up almost immediately. The human foot is larger and more cumbersome than a mule's. Each time we took a step the muck would engulf our boots halfway to the knees and it would require a major excavation to release ourselves. For the rest of the day we settled on sore behinds as the lesser of two evils.

In the rain the jungle about us was even more impressive than under the bright tropic sun. Steaming, fecund moisture seemed the proper element for this wild profuseness of vegetation. The

cries of the birds and the droning of insects were stilled, and no animal life was to be seen anywhere; yet here, we felt, in the steaming, sweating darkness of the forest was transpiring the very generation of life itself. In such a world of ooze and mist and tangled, soaring vegetation the first primeval blob of animal jelly must, unnumbered ages ago, have taken form and grown.

Our route still lay uphill, and for most of the day the trail wound in and out about the shoulders of the wooded slopes. We crossed a dozen streams each mile, and when there were no streams the dense foliage overhead poured down cascades of their own upon our heads. On the downhill side of the path the ground fell away sharply into a tangled green abyss out of which rose the tall, columnar trunks of the great ceibas and palms, as if from a dark, unfathomable well. Their leafy summits were even with the trail on which we rode; their roots were lost in a shadowy nether-world of unimaginable chaos. Plunging off into it, a man, a mule, our whole pack train would be overwhelmed and lost as completely as if it were the ocean.

Toward mid-afternoon the rain became torrential, and up went the hoods of our ponchos. They were broad, deep hoods, and the world inside them was dry and snug. Mine extended well out before my face, above and on both sides, and all I could see from its depths were Edward's dripping ears and the patch of red mud directly before him. The rain drummed on the outside of the hood—faint, impersonal, and far away. The trail and the jungle too were presently far away, and I was warm and drowsy, and Ruth and I were riding in the car along a Westchester road and—Wham! Scr-r-ratch— Something hard and determined punched me in the face; my hood was knocked off my head, and I found myself sitting somewhere in the vicinity of Edward's tail, trying frantically not to slide off him altogether. If one wishes to sleep while riding on the Pichis Trail, it is advisable to send a representative ahead to cut off the branches of the trees.

We were not wet when we arrived at Tambo Eneñez—our ponchos were true marvels of efficiency—but we were just about everything else in the dictionary of discomfort. Ten hours astride

a mule, without dismounting at any time for more than five minutes, do not tend to loosen up the joints and muscles. Several times during the night we awoke thinking we had heard a jaguar howling; but it was only ourselves creaking as we turned over in our sleep.

Eneñez, we discovered in the morning, was a considerably more attractive *tambo* than its predecessor; in fact, it proved to be the best of the lot along the Pichis Trail. Its proprietor was an aged Italian, with an Indian wife and some two dozen indeterminate children, and, in addition to decorating every available patch of wall with pictures of Mussolini and Hollywood movie queens, he had succeeded in carving a presentable vegetable and flower garden out of the encroaching jungle. When we paid our bill before leaving (supper, mattress and breakfast for two—six soles) he made us each a present of a *boutonnière*.

The day was gray and thick with mist when we set out, but by mid-morning it had cleared, and the sun burned so brightly that within an hour the last vestiges of the torrential rains of the previous day were entirely obliterated—except, of course, for the mud on the trail. Neither sun nor season nor drought nor passing years have any effect on the Pichis mud. There it is, and there it stays.

We were still gaining altitude (Dos de Mayo, the next *tambo*, is the highest on the trail), and our way for most of the day's ride lay high up near the summits of the hills. Surefootedly, painstakingly, with the greatest precautions for their own safety—and therefore, incidentally, for ours—the mules picked their way through the slime and boulders of the path. Six inches to the side of us the ground fell away sharply into deep canyons—all the more menacing because screened by the dense vegetation. A misstep by Edward or Wally, and the epic of the Rover Boys in Darkest Peru would have ended abruptly some five hundred feet below. But they did not make a misstep, and—still more remarkable—we were at no time nervous or apprehensive, because we *knew* they would not make a misstep. The mule is a thick-

skinned, opinionated and unfriendly animal, and it is almost impossible to develop affection for him. But I defy anyone to ride him for a week over a difficult trail and not feel respect for him. His way may be the slowest way, but it is also the safest and the surest; and if you provide him with sufficient food and rest—of which he requires amazingly little—he will get you where you want to go. There is inevitably something impressive in an organism—be it man, animal or machine—performing its exactly proper function in the exactly proper way. That's what Edward and Wally did on the Pichis Trail, and, however humble their task, they were mighty damned impressive doing it.

The whole mail-train of fifty-nine mules and ten *arrieros* seldom stayed together on the day's march. Usually it was spread out on the trail over five miles or more, and our little unit, headed by Baldwin-Lopez, was to all intents and purposes alone. Our usual order of procession was first, the five mules carrying mail which Lopez had under his charge; next, the pack-mule with our baggage; next, the indefatigable Lopez himself, hurling sticks and "Hulas!" at the laggards; next, Herman; and finally myself. When either Herman or I was afoot we walked at a distance of some twenty or thirty yards behind the others; to venture closer was to invite a head-to-foot mud bath from the pumping feet of the mules.

No animals were provided for the *arrieros*, and, except for an occasional fifteen minutes on Edward or Wally, Lopez walked. He was a brown, stocky man with a bandit's mustache, and though he was no longer any youngster his energy and endurance were tremendous. He had, he told us, been driving mules on the Pichis Trail for ten years, and we were not long in discovering that he was a master at his trade. He could fasten three hundred pounds of baggage onto the back of a mule as quickly and securely as an average man can fasten his belt. His timing was infallible; if at noon he declared we would be at Tambo So-and-So at 5:27 P.M., we were there at 5:27 P.M.—no sooner and no later. And his surefootedness and agility along the rutted, inundated trail put even the mules to shame. He knew infallibly

which rotted tree-trunk or tuft of grass would support his feet, and which would not; and he seemed to walk right across the surface of bog holes into which Herman and I would sink half-way to our knees. "*Hula! Hula! Carrajo-bula!*"—the lead-mule would receive a flying stick where it did most good. As grand marshal of our parade he was tireless and efficient.

As if to compensate us for the woes of yesterday, today's was a short march. We reached Tambo Dos de Mayo (also known as Kilometer 71, or El Cumbre) shortly after three and celebrated by a sunbath and a change of underdrawers. The latter was a unique event, for every other article of clothing we wore when we left Tarma stayed right where it was until we reached Puerto Yessup. Dos de Mayo, highest point on the Pichis, was situated on the knob of a bare hill, and for miles around we had an unobstructed view of the endlessly rolling jungle. Toward nightfall, however, a heavy mist crept up about us from the valleys below and our hilltop home was wrapped in darkness and utter isolation.

Sunday is Sunday, be it on East 85th Street, Manhattan, or at Kilometer 71, Pichis Trail. This particular one was unmistakable. The sun shone brightly, but with a lazy instead of a ferocious heat. We were late in starting, the mules seemed only half-awake as they plodded along and all I needed was the rotogravure section of the *Sunday Times* to read as we idled through the jungle. I thought of Ruth, probably at that very moment reading it in bed and happy at having it all to herself—for a change.

The forest through which we now progressed was cut by a thousand streams. Some flowed down across the trail, and we forded them. Some dropped sheer upon it from rocky shelves above, and we ducked them. Others we could see coursing through the valleys below. And still others we could not see at all, but heard incessantly as they gurgled in the deep recesses of the vegetation. They flowed in every direction of the compass, wherever the contours of the earth directed. Some followed our course along the trail, some crossed it at right angles, and some flowed in the opposite direction. But their destinations were all

the same—and so was ours. However far astray they might go, into whatever distant valleys or through whatever dark jungles, their waters would eventually find the Amazon and the Atlantic Ocean. It was an impressive, a thrilling, realization—this ordered, inevitable march of nature in what seemed the very heart of primeval chaos.

If Lopez was the grand marshal of our cavalcade, Herman was its drum major. Like the mules and the vegetation he flourished in the jungle, and in both voice and plumage put the birds of the forest to shame. The only tune he appeared to know was "Let the Rest of the World Roll By," but he did not let that daunt him; and if subsequent travelers on the Pichis are surprised to hear the macaws by the roadside croaking its strains they should remember that the birds had one full, uninterrupted week in which to memorize it. Somewhere in Tarma Herman had acquired a stiff straw hat with an enormous brim, and he was never without it on the trail, tipped at a drugstore-cowboy angle and with a waving crown of ferns stuck in the band for embellishment. It topped off his mule and his Boy-Scout outfit with considerable effect. Another acquisition of which he was most fond was a ten-foot bamboo lance, which he had cut from a tree as we passed and whittled to his own specifications. He used it alternately as a spear, to ward off the hordes of imaginary Chunchos who attacked us, and as a probe, to stir up the equally imaginary anacondas and jaguars who lurked in the underbrush beside the trail. And on one occasion he employed it—I believe inadvertently—to hoist himself right off his mule into the mud. But, for all that, he cut a fine figure of an adventuring hero, did Herman—excuse me—did Daniel Boone Rover Merriwell-Quixote. And there was no need for him to fear the Chunchos. One look at that seven-day beard, that bamboo pole and that "kelly" with the waving ferns, and their stoutest warrior would have been half-way to Hoboken before Herman could say "howdy."

When we arrived toward evening at Tambo Porvenir we found our chicken and rice and rice and chicken already prepared and waiting for us. In most respects the Pichis *tambos* are hardly up

to metropolitan hotel standards, but when it comes to advance preparation for guests they are in a class by themselves. A solitary telephone wire runs along the whole length of the trail, laid originally for military purposes but used chiefly as a medium of gossip between the various *tambo*-keepers; and at each night's stop our impending arrival was known well in advance, as well as any other facts about us which our host of the previous night had been able to pick up and transmit. It was a strange feeling—traveling through the wilderness and yet having everyone you met know all about you, as if your advance press-agent had been there the day before.

Apart from its impressive preliminary preparations for us, Porvenir was the worst *tambo* we encountered on the trail. Most of the others were kept by *mestizos* (half-whites, half-Indians), but the proprietor here was a full-blooded aborigine; and though the Peruvian Indians may love godliness well enough they most certainly do not love its officially appointed neighbor at all. We were tired, but not quite tired enough to share our mattresses with the entire vermin population of Latin America, and spent most of the night in the open. It was one of those brilliant, unreal tropic nights so well known to literature and so rare in fact. For hours we lay on our backs in the grass and watched the pageantry of the stars. We almost found the Southern Cross.

The first event on the morning's program was for me to ride into the telephone wire at a low-hanging point and almost decapitate myself. Besides knocking myself off Edward's back I knocked the wire off its nearest mooring on a wayside tree. Perhaps, Herman suggested, it would gum up the connection sufficiently to make our arrival at San Nicolaus a surprise. I was busy trying to find my Adam's apple and didn't care much.

The second event was that we saw our first, last and only live animal on the Pichis Trail. It was a snake—a rather handsome fellow about five feet in length, strikingly banded in black and silver. Suddenly it slithered through the grass beside the path, less than a yard from the mules' feet but paying no attention to



THE TAMBO AT PUERTO YESSUP



A CHUNCHO FAMILY (WITH GUEST) AT TAMBO SANTA ROSA



them, and just as suddenly disappeared. Our study of animal life in the Peruvian *montaña* was over.

Tambo San Nicolaus was fifteen hundred feet lower than Porvenir, and we lost altitude rapidly as we advanced. The atmosphere grew steadily warmer and heavier, and the vegetation even wilder and more lush than it had been during our first four days on the trail. Ferns spread beside the path, some of them to a breadth twice the span of a man's arms; the ceiba trees and other forest giants reared up their heads two hundred feet above the jungle bush; looking to right or left, the vision was almost immediately blocked off in an incredible, strangled turmoil of roots, trunks, leaves, creepers and vines. The trail narrowed, as if squeezed into itself from either side by the enormous pressure of vegetable growth. Overhead the summit foliage of the taller trees often met and mingled, and we passed through a dim, green tunnel in faint twilight. At such times, although the sun was hidden from us, the heat was far more oppressive than when we rode in its full glare. The sweating dampness of the forest pressed upon us like a physical weight; no wisp of air stirred. It was as if we were riding along the bottom of a stagnant lake—a watery, choking world without light or motion. There were few times in our journey down the Pichis that we experienced that sense of the jungle's menace, of which one so often hears tell. Perhaps this was because we were traveling in a large company and made a good deal of noise as we went along. But on this one occasion, at least, we *felt* the jungle, and it made us a little afraid.

Since leaving Pueblo Pardo we had not encountered a single wayfarer between *tambos* on the entire trail. Now at last one came along, and at first sight he was a very strange-looking wayfarer indeed. His costume consisted of a pair of heavy shoes, a union suit and a Peruvian army cap, and he bounced along with a heel-and-toe stride reminiscent of a walking race at a track-meet. A few minutes later another one came along, then another, then two or three more—all wearing union suits and army caps and all tearing along as if the official starter had just fired his gun. They told us they had just finished a term of service at

Puerto Bermudez and were on their way back to Lima. But what they would put on over their underwear when they arrived remained a mystery.

It was a long jump from Porvenir to San Nicolaus, and the day wore on slowly. Apparently we were passing along a stretch where some fern particularly beloved of mules was growing along the trail, for every ten steps Wally's or Edward's head would go down and our procession would come to an abrupt halt to the sound of satisfied munching. At about four o'clock we came to a large, thatched shed, where the pack mules who had preceded us were being unburdened and turned into pasture, and we thought we had reached the end of the day's trek. Such was not the case, however; the *tambo* itself, we learned, was still another two miles along the trail. It was here that our ordinarily imperturbable steeds gave their only exhibition of emotion on the entire trip. They looked longingly at the shed, as we rode past, and at their more fortunate brothers rolling in the grass, and their anguished wails of protest rent the air. They were pretty unhappy animals for the rest of the day's trip.

The *tambos* we had stopped at thus far had all been one-story structures. San Nicolaus was in two levels—a style of building that persisted from this point, along both trail and rivers, all the way to Iquitos. The lower level had no floor or walls, but was simply the sheltered space between the log beams which supported the upper level. This was reserved for the use of the hogs, chickens, cows, visiting Chunchos and such travelers as could not afford the one *sol* charged for sleeping quarters. Upstairs the floor and walls were of woven bamboo, soft and springy for sleeping (we were now out of the mattress-belt) but with a tendency to sag alarmingly if one walked about too heavily. Over all was a high, sloping roof of thatch, designed to shed the rain but actually a most ingenious primitive showerbath for the use of guests. But the extra-special feature of San Nicolaus was that we were served our chicken and rice in *three* courses, instead of the usual two. Incidentally, my set-to with the telephone

wire had had no effect; everyone apparently knew all about the *señors nortamericanos* long before we arrived.

San Nicolaus was situated near the easternmost extremity of the hills through which we had been passing, and the trail beyond cut across almost flat country. During the morning we picked up the Pichis River, on our right, and the rest of our course to Puerto Yessup lay along or near its bank. Near San Nicolaus it is still little more than a mountain stream, and it is not until it reaches Yessup that it is navigable even for canoes. Now we began encountering other rivers flowing down through the forest across the trail to join the Pichis. Some were spanned by primitive suspension bridges—bamboo planking hung from a steel cable—which swayed and undulated dizzily as the mules clopped across them. Others we forded, our feet propped somewhere in the vicinity of our mules' ears to keep them dry.

Toward midday we crossed a muddy, sloppy stream, which boasted the most fascinatingly accurate name I have ever encountered: Azupizu—pronounced "Soupy Sue." On the farther bank was a *tambo*, the only one on the trail at which we did not spend a night; we celebrated its unexpected appearance by the first lunch we had had since leaving La Merced. To our great astonishment the chicken and rice were served in only one course.

During the afternoon the trail was less tortuous and muddy than usual, and we literally flew along at some two-and-a-half miles per hour. As the sun was setting we suddenly came upon what we thought was an Indian village, only to discover that it was our day's destination, Tambo Santa Rosa. We had met two or three Chunchos at nearly every *tambo* on the way, but this one was swarming with them. Their permanent home, apparently, was the lower level of the *tambo*, where they were inextricably mixed up with, and almost indistinguishable from, the cows and hogs. They slept on the ground, sometimes with an obliging animal for a pillow, and their food consisted partly of the meager spoils their men brought in from the forest and partly

of the scraps thrown them by the proprietor of the *tambo*—including, on that evening, the left-overs from our plates.

The proprietor, as a matter of fact, was as interesting to us as the herd of Indians. She was female—a shriveled old woman in her sixties, obviously pure white, and living entirely alone. There was not a Spanish Peruvian—or even a half-breed—anywhere on the place, but apparently the old girl got along very nicely without them. She shouted at the Indians, pushed them off the upper level of the *tambo*, and slapped the children's faces; and when during the night they became noisy she marched downstairs and bawled them out like a top-sergeant. No lace-and-lavender old lady she, but a veritable virago of the jungle. We were careful to observe our best company manners.

I can give my personal assurance that Rousseau was not thinking of the Chunchos when he envisioned his "Noble Savage." I have heard from missionaries and others that they are fairly intelligent and that the children, in particular, exhibit marked ability to learn; but in their native state they are as brutish and unprepossessing a breed of human beings as one could expect to find anywhere on earth. The term "Chunchos" is loosely used in Peru to designate any or all of the Indians of the *montaña*, as distinguished from the Andean Indians—the descendants of the Incas—who are called "Indios" or simply "cholos." Spread through the whole eastern half of the country, these Chunchos are divided into many tribes, differing one from the other in many of their characteristics and customs, but all of the same general stock and appearance. Whereas the Incaic Indian of the mountains is apt to be short and shriveled, these jungle aborigines are usually tall and heavily built, the women in particular often inclining to fatness. And whereas the former, through centuries of virtual slavery—first to the Incas, then to the whites—has become docile and almost cringing, the latter, whose contact with civilization has been negligible, are usually independent in spirit and manner. In the early days of colonization in the *montaña*, they offered fierce resistance to the intruding whites, and as recently as 1915, when a traveling functionary from Lima

was imprudent enough to appropriate a chief's daughter as a concubine, they responded by burning every *tambo* along the Pichis Trail and killing every white man in the region on whom they could lay their hands. At no time in history, so far as is known, have they had any traffic with the more highly civilized Indians of the west coast. The jungle is their home, and through the centuries to the present day they have lived by primitive jungle economy.

Perhaps you have detected traces of the "Noble Savage" in the foregoing description. If so, I assure you that a personal encounter with the Chunchos would unburden you of the impression—at least an encounter with the members of the Amuesha and Campa tribes whom we met along the Pichis Trail. The Amueshas live along the western part of the trail, occasionally work on the sugar or coffee haciendas of the Chanchamayo, and have learned something of the white man's ways. The Campas, who dwell along the eastern part of the trail and by the Pichis and Pachitea rivers are more isolated and aloof. But in most respects the two groups are indistinguishable. They look alike, dress alike, live alike, and are equally dirty.

Their costume is weird and has an interesting history. It consists invariably of a single loosely flowing brown garment—very similar, we noted immediately, to a monk's robe. And indeed that is exactly what it is. In the early days of South American colonization the *Conquistadores* stayed close to the quick-and-easy riches of the Andes, leaving the penetration of the interior to the various religious orders who soon followed them to the New World. The first contact of the Chunchos with the outside world was therefore with the Jesuits, Franciscans and Dominicans, and from them they first learned to cover their nakedness with clothes. As the only clothes they had ever seen were the robes of the monks, they copied them and have continued wearing them to this day. Whether the swarming vermin that invariably cover the Chunchos' garment are also of monastic origin we shall respectfully leave undetermined.

The male Chuncho's headdress—presumably his own invention,

for it is unique—is made of straw and resembles a modern American “kelly,” with the crown knocked out and worn upside down. Usually a single upright feather tops off the contraption. The women go hatless, but as esthetic compensation they paint their faces in bright crimson streaks with the juice of the native achiote berry. Another berry they use to string into necklaces. Along the Pichis we saw women with as much as ten pounds of the little beads about their necks. Both males and females go barefoot, and here we must make our one bow to Rousseau: in every respect (except cleanliness) their strong, well-shaped, supple feet put the cramped, shoe-deformed underpinning of civilized man to shame. I have seen Chunchos perform tasks with their toes so delicate that the average man would have difficulty with them using his fingers.

Apparently it was scratching-time when we arrived at Santa Rosa, for the local colony of Campas were gathered in the mud under the *tambo* and busily engaged in either rubbing their backs against the log uprights or picking things from one another's hair. The adults, at first, paid little or no attention to us, but the children followed us en masse upstairs to our sleeping quarters and proceeded to make themselves at home. Every article we took from our duffelbags was handled and closely scrutinized, and presently one enterprising youngster helped himself to one of my cigarettes and lighted it. This started an immediate clamor for equal rights from the others, and I confess, with a proper blush of shame, that I handed out cigarettes to all of them. After a long, tiring day on the trail the corruption of Chuncho youth seemed a far lesser evil than the riot that would have ensued if I had played favorites. By this time the mother—or one of the mother's—had come upstairs and was leaning in the doorway watching the proceedings. She was an enormous heifer of a woman, as tall as I was and weighing over two hundred pounds, and as she stood there she was cutting calluses, or something, from her hands with a *machete* the size of a butcher's cleaver. I breathed an inaudible, but fervent, prayer that none of the kids would get sick from the cigarettes.

Ordinarily, if you are trying to take a snapshot in Peru, every able-bodied citizen within a mile's radius will rush into the line of focus and strike a pose. The Chunchos, however, are exceptions to the rule and notoriously camera-shy, and we put in an hour's hard work before we finally photographed them. We dished out cigarettes, chocolate and good-will right and left with no effect. We even tried stealth, but as I was about to sneak a picture I caught the large lady with the *machete* staring at me balefully and thought better of the idea. Finally our problem was solved by good old Baldwin-Lopez, who was about as camera-shy as Mae West. He posed for his picture while the Chunchos looked on, and when they saw how much he enjoyed it they decided they might as well have a try too. Herman stood off with the camera and shouted directions. I lined up with the Noble Savages, tried to look like Stanley in Darkest Africa, and hoped that the animal-life on my neighbors' robes would stay where it was. But when the photographs were later developed, it was esthetically just about a stand-off between the Chunchos and Ullman. The Noble New Yorker, with his last bath and shave ten days behind him, was no bargain either.

The last lap was the longest. The distance between Santa Rosa and Yessup, on the Pichis River, is twenty-eight miles, and while twenty-eight miles is not very much in terms of carburetor and cylinder it is plenty in terms of a mule for whom two-and-a-half miles an hour is practically racing. We were on the march from six to six, without a stop.

A short way out from Santa Rosa we suddenly became aware of a new sound mingled with the familiar jungle noises. At first it eluded us; then, as it grew louder, we recognized it. It was the beating of a tom-tom. Soon we encountered groups of Chunchos passing along the trail, and when they reached a point at which the sound came directly from the right, they cut off in its direction through what seemed impenetrable forest. Lopez explained that it was a feast-day of the tribe, and the ceremonies were being held in a clearing near our present point on the trail.

Sure enough, a brief break in the foliage beside the path soon gave us a sudden view of a distant grassy slope, dotted with human figures, and with a thin column of smoke arising from a fire in its center. Then it was gone, screened again by a wall of vegetation. The rhythmic, hollow cadence of the tom-tom, however, followed us for an hour or more along the trail, faintly beating, beating, beating through the jungle. To one raised on many "Tarzans" and "Trader Horns" its familiar, yet unfamiliar, sound brought a strange feeling and familiar images and, I confess, a faint tingling of the nerve-ends at the back of the neck.

We had now penetrated into the heart of a world of rivers. The Pichis broadened visibly as we rode beside it, and the streams that crossed the trail to feed it were wider and deeper than on the previous day. Some we forded and some we crossed by swaying suspension bridges. Later in the wet season, when they would be swollen by many months of rain, their crossing would present a real problem, for half the suspension bridges are washed away each year and the streams to be forded would be boiling torrents. Now, however, all the bridges were still intact—though hardly substantial—and in only one of the streams we forded did we so much as get our feet wet. About noon we came to the river with a name as euphonious as "Soupy Sue's" was apt—Miriতিরিানি. It was larger than its sister-streams, and a half-awake Indian in a dugout canoe was on hand to ferry men and mail across, while the mules swam. On the far bank were the charred ruins of what had once been Tambo Miriতিরিানি. It had burned down, Lopez told us, about six months before.

As the afternoon wore on it grew almost unbearably hot. We were tired; we were dirty; our backsides were sick to death of the feel of mule; and Yessup seemed farther away than El Dorado. During the morning Herman had suffered a nasty spill when Wally fell in a mudhole (incidentally, the only time any of our mules fell during the entire trip) and he was feeling pretty shaken up. I had no such specific complaint but, between an epidermis that I judged would take at least a week to rid of

caked mud and a pair of buttocks that I knew were paralyzed for life, I was not feeling in the sprightliest of humors either. Would the damn trail never end?

To add to our moroseness, and as if in mockery of our woes, an airplane suddenly droned overhead—startling and unreal in the motionless immensity of sky and jungle. Lima-Iquitos: 2 days. And we—damn fools that we were—were, of our own free will, spending three weeks for the selfsame trip—plodding along through a God-forsaken, sweating wilderness on mules, eating dirty, ill-cooked food and sleeping in hovels, covering ourselves with mud and sweat and insect bites, living in a state little better than that of animals, when we might have traveled in dignity and comfort, like civilized human beings! In ten seconds the plane was gone from sight—clear, quick, clean. Now, we thought, it is already over Puerto Yessup, now over Bermudez, now roaring down the Ucayali on powerful, humming motors— And the mules put one foot in front of the other, and then the other foot in front of that; and the sweat rolled down our faces and made channels in the mud—

We were standing knee-deep in the clear, swirling water, and our eyes looked out at the world through a film of soap lather. About us the accumulated muck of ten days eddied away and vanished in the swift flow of the Pichis River. Fifty yards away, on a green bank, rose the bamboo walls and high thatch roof of Tambo Puerto Yessup, and before it was a forest of mule legs, upturned and kicking. We thought we could see Wally and Edward among them, scratching away their last memories of us as we were soaping away our last memories of them.

*"Comida—Comida!"* cried the tambo-keeper, gesturing at us from the bank.

As I came up out of the river my body was cool and clean and tingling. Before me in the west the red sun was just disappearing behind a range of distant hills—the last of the Andes. We had come through them—up their farther side, across their summits,

down their nearer side—through their mud and rivers and jungles. The Pichis Trail was behind us, and in the clear, clean sunset of that final day I knew I wouldn't exchange it for the *Normandie*, the Yankee Clipper and the Twentieth Century Limited rolled into one.

## VII

### THROUGH PERU'S BACK YARD

WE AWOKE early the following day, to experience that sense of pleasant excitement which accompanies the knowledge that one is about to undertake something new. Mules, mud, *tambos* and jungle trails were behind us; for the next six weeks and the next three thousand miles our life would be on the rivers of the Amazon.

I say "rivers of the Amazon" advisedly. At Puerto Yessup we were still a thousand miles from the Amazon proper, and to reach it we had first to descend the Pichis River, then the Pachitea, then the Ucayali, almost to Iquitos. But although we were technically far away from the line on the maps labeled "Amazon," we were actually already well within its vast province, and had been, indeed, since we encountered the first eastward-flowing mountain streams outside of Tarma. For the word "Amazon," in its genuine significance, does not so much mean any individual river as it does the whole enormous network of rivers which cover the center of the South American continent and drain an area larger than that of the United States. Call the stream that flows by Puerto Yessup the Pichis River, or whatever you like; it is part and parcel of Amazonia. And from within two hundred miles of the Pacific Ocean, across the widest part of the continent to the Atlantic, our route from this point on would lie along one great, continuous, inland waterway.

Eastern Peru is dependent exclusively upon the Amazon for its transportation and communication. Three large tributary rivers branch south from the main stream in the extreme north of the country—the Marañón, the Huallaga and the Ucayali. Their courses are almost parallel, separated from each other by two or three hundred miles, and each has its source some thousand

miles south of the Amazon proper, in approximately the latitude of Lima. All are large, sweeping streams when they reach the Amazon, but, of the three, the Ucayali is the largest and by far the most important. Both the Marañón and Huallaga flow for the greater part of their length through the Andean highlands and are navigable for launches or steamships for only a few hundred miles below the points at which they break through the plateau and reach the lowlands of the *montaña*. The Ucayali, on the other hand, flows east of the easternmost range of the Andes; its course is entirely through the flat jungle country, and it is therefore navigable, as are its tributaries, for virtually its entire length. It is the great central artery of Peru's *montaña* and carries a full seventy-five percent of its commerce. Starting at Puerto Yessup on the Pichis, proceeding from the Pichis to the Pachitea, to the Ucayali, to the Amazon proper, and finally following the Amazon along its full length to the Atlantic, we would be making the longest continuous river journey possible on the whole Amazonian system—which is the same as saying the longest continuous river journey in the world.

At Yessup, however, our thoughts were not so much on the next three thousand miles as on the next thirty—by canoe to Puerto Bermudez. It was there, or a few miles beyond, that we would be picked up by the mail-launch, the exact spot depending upon the depth of the river at the moment and the luck of the launch in dodging sandbars. At the height of the rainy season, the launches can get through all the way to Bermudez; in the dry season they often cannot get farther than Masisea, one hundred and fifty miles farther down, and it is necessary to travel three or four days by canoe. Theoretically this was the rainy season; but so far it had been a rainy season practically without rain, and all we knew was that the launch was somewhere between us and Iquitos.

We dressed and breakfasted in unaccustomed leisure, for our knee-boots were now consigned to the duffelbags, and the fifteen minutes formerly devoted to lacing them were ours to waste as we chose. Meanwhile, on the river bank in front of the *tambo*,

the mail sacks were being loaded into the canoes. These were all of the dugout variety, cut in one piece from the trunk of the huge ceiba tree, but of varying sizes. The largest was an enormous craft, well over fifty feet in length; the other two were perhaps thirty and twenty-five feet, respectively. None of them, however, was more than four feet in width at its widest point, and it was almost a miracle of equilibrium that they could carry their heavy loads of mail and men without capsizing. When underway, their gunwales were never more than two inches above water, but only once or twice did so much as a drop lap over into the canoes.

Our good friend, Baldwin-Lopez, bade us good-by with a cheery "Hello, meester!" and at his own suggestion posed for a final snapshot. Edward and Wally we saw only at a distance; this was their one day of grace before beginning the return trip to La Merced with the westbound mail, and they were far too busy in pasture to be concerned with farewells. We perched ourselves atop what seemed the softest mail bags in the middle-sized canoe, the senior partner of our crew of two tooted vociferously on a shell horn, and we were off to the races.

"Off to the races" is not merely a metaphor. Later in its course the Pichis River flattens out into a deep, evenly flowing stream, but here at Yessup, and for some miles below, it is a bouncing, prankish, mountain torrent. Five minutes out and we were in white water, swishing through rapids, grinding over the gravel bottom, playing cops and robbers with projecting boulders. There was no paddling to be done—only steering, and the two boatmen threaded us in and out between the rocks like a halfback running a broken-field in a football game. They got as much enjoyment out of it as if they were making the trip for the first time in their lives, instead of perhaps the thousandth. Each time we accomplished a successful maneuver one of them would toot triumphantly on the shell horn, and we would then pull up near shore and wait to see how the other canoes would fare coming through. The largest of the canoes, as it turned out, often didn't fare so well. It would zoom into the rapids, with its

crew of six brandishing their paddles like demons and its cargo of mail within one inch of the swirling water, waver from side to side as eddies and cross-currents squeezed it, and end up backside forward against a convenient rock. Whereupon its crew would pile out into the water, pry it loose, and brandish their paddles again until they brought up against the next impasse. Each time they came through they blew their horns (they had two) defiantly at us and waited, in turn, for the third canoe to try its luck. It was more fun than a picnic at the asylum, but I recommend to anyone contemplating sending a letter over this mail-route that he dispatch it with a cellophane wrapping, waterwings, and a fervent prayer.

Our particular craft fared fabulously well until the last series of rapids (there were six in all), where we came to a sudden sidewise halt in what looked like a half-submerged granite quarry. The two boatmen got out and pushed, but the canoe stuck fast. Herman and I then removed our shoes and socks, rolled up our trousers and joined them. I'm afraid we were neither very comfortable nor very impressive, slithering about on the sharp stones while the rushing water sought to knock our feet out from under us; but we must have been of some help—indeed, too much help—for almost immediately the canoe came free and began scooting away as if it had suddenly acquired a six-cylinder motor. With a lunge that would have done credit to the Young-Man-on-the-Flying-Trapeze, one of the boatmen succeeded in catching its stern as it went by, and in a moment we were in command of our ship again. A half-inch shorter reach, however, and the Iquitos mail would have been en route to its destination without benefit of human guidance.

Beyond the last rapids the river leveled off into a regular, unbroken sweep, but its waters were still mountain-fresh and clear. Pleasantly relaxed after the excitement of the past hour, we lay back on the mail sacks, sunning ourselves and watching the unbroken walls of jungle slip by on either side. Soon the sound of the rushing waters behind us had faded into the distance, but it

was not long before we were brought upright by another sound, strange and startling in the silent wilderness.

"Damned if it's not dynamite," said Herman.

And it was. Rounding a bend in the river we came upon two men in a small dugout. They were fishing, but not in a manner we had ever seen before. As we passed, one of them took a stick of dynamite from the bottom of the boat, attached the detonator, and hurled it out into the water. In a moment there was a muffled roar from the depths of the river, and the surface churned and boiled. As the commotion subsided, the contents of the depths began to float up into view: fish, eels, snakes, submarine vegetation, slimy, indeterminate things for which even the Museum of Natural History would not have a name. The fishermen then paddled among the debris and secured what they wanted of it with nets. This method of fishing, we subsequently discovered, is the common practice in all the Amazonian rivers. There is so much animal and vegetable matter in the water for fish to feed upon that they will seldom take a hook. The Indians harpoon them with great patience and skill. The white men dynamite them out. Hardly a sporting procedure, one is apt to feel, but along the Amazon fishing is not a sport. Often it is the only method of sustaining life.

After eight days on the Pichis Trail, we had almost forgotten the institution of the midday meal and were therefore considerably surprised when, about noon, the canoes put in at a lonely riverside hacienda and our boatmen announced: "*Almuerzo*." The stopping-place proved to be the home of the mail-contractor in whose canoes we were traveling, and his hospitality far outdid his transportation facilities. He was a man in his middle forties, soft-spoken and well-educated. He had been born and raised, he told us, in Arequipa, but at twenty-five had come to the *montaña* and stayed. He had an Indian wife and eight children whom he was educating himself—and apparently with rather good success. He declared he was going to take all eight of them to Lima in the near future, but seemed a bit doubtful as to whether he would live through the experience. Meanwhile he had succeeded

in hacking an astonishingly comfortable and well-kept hacienda out of the wilderness, and the meal he served us was the best we had had since leaving Lima, not even excepting Nat Whitten's Bolivar.

Read a dozen travel books about any one country and you will get a dozen different accounts of the hospitality or lack of hospitality of its natives. It is one subject on which no two travelers ever agree. My own experience in Peru was almost identical with what I had previously encountered in a dozen-odd countries of Europe: in the large cities or tourist centers you get what you pay for (or slightly less); in the undeveloped hinterland the traveler who neither gives offense nor arouses suspicion is welcomed and accommodated as a matter of course, without thought of profit. I have heard often enough from gringos who have lived long below the equator that the average Latin-American is a grasping, greedy fellow; and there is ample evidence to support the accusation. Perhaps I was not in Peru long enough to give validity to my observations, but my personal experiences were directly to the contrary. In Lima, to be sure, there were the inevitable debates with cab drivers and waiters, but on the entire overland trip to Iquitos I did not once encounter the outstretched arm or the itching palm. Sometimes when we stopped off at a hacienda or *chacra* we would be charged a nominal sum for food and lodging; at other times our hosts would accept nothing, and occasionally even took offense at our offers to pay.

"*No esta un hotel, señor,*" I was told by the poverty-stricken owner of a hut on the Amazon when I tried to give him a *sol* in return for a night's shelter under his thatch roof.

No, I have knocked around a bit in various corners of the world and I have never yet found a back-country host—whether he bear the appellation of hill-billy, *paysanne*, *Bauer* or *cholo*—who was out to "do" the traveler. As for the acquisitive instinct in higher and more civilized places—who am I to talk about Peru, who come from the city of Tammany Hall?

Our Pichis River lunch was of the *gratis* variety. The mail-

contractor stared at our proffered *soles* as if they were scorpions we had pulled from our pockets and shook his head violently; the best we could do to show our appreciation was to hand out pennies to the eight offspring. They were better business men than their father and should do well in Lima when he finally takes them there on that big trip.

Shortly after we had pushed off in the canoes, it began to rain, and the downpour continued throughout the two-hour journey to Puerto Bermudez. The canoes, heavily laden to begin with, now almost sank from sight beneath the water under the weight of their water-soaked cargoes. The other two craft, pushing along beside ours, looked simply like a collection of canvas sacks floating downstream, with a few shipwrecked oarsmen perched on top of them. It was with considerable surprise that we discovered, upon reaching Bermudez, that the canoes were still with us after all, deep down under their dripping superstructure of mail and men.

Puerto Bermudez—a pin-point on the map, a huddle of thatched huts in the jungle, but a veritable metropolis to us, who had not seen a structure outranking a *tambo* for eight days and nights! The village squatted on top of a high mudbank, and as we coasted in, the entire population of some seventy-five humans and five hundred dogs lined up along its crest to watch us. There was no steam-launch in evidence, but two large dug-outs, one with an outboard motor, were pulled up on the shore. These, it developed, had been sent up by the launch to collect the mail and passengers (if any), the larger craft having encountered sandbar trouble about thirty miles downstream. It was five in the afternoon when we reached Bermudez. The mail sacks, we were told, were to be transferred to the other canoes immediately. We would leave in them at seven—

Bermudez had one unique feature: an enterprising hotel keeper. He met us halfway up the mud embankment and greeted us cordially.

*"Comida a hotel, señores?"*

We told him we were leaving at seven and would have dinner later in the evening on the launch. The mail-contractor—our good host at lunch, who had come down with the canoes to Bermudez—corroborated us.

"*Sí, señores, muy buena comida a lancha. Nos vamos a siete pronto.*"

The hotel keeper, disappointed, went away, and we set about the earnest business of killing time. We inspected the town's ten thatched huts and one brick edifice (the post office), watched the transference of the mail and our baggage from one canoe to another, and kicked a soccer ball around with the mail-contractor and some of his Bermudian friends. Presently it grew dark, and he excused himself.

"I am dining with my cousin," he explained. "I shall see you at eleven o'clock."

"But we're leaving at seven, aren't we?"

"Seven, señor? No. No, indeed. The canoes cannot go until the moon has risen. That will be at eleven—*pronto!*"

And with a friendly wave of the hand he was off. We repaired to the thatched hut with the sign "HOTEL" and told the proprietor that we—or somebody—had changed our minds. We would like *comida* very much indeed. He looked at us with a pained expression.

"Señores, I am sorry—I am *apesadumbrado*. But you said you were leaving. I ate all the food there was myself."

He accompanied us while we tried our luck at the other huts; but apparently the village was in the grip of famine. One householder offered us a cluster of green bananas; another said that earlier in the day he had seen a large turtle on the river bank and we might be able to catch it; the rest just said "*No aí*" and let it go at that. The hotel keeper was a broken man.

"Señores, at least accept the hospitality of my rooms. I have two fine beds, with very few roaches."

We thanked him, but explained we were leaving at eleven. There would be no point in going to bed for three or four hours. After he left us we sat on the mudbank, watching the

river and swatting mosquitoes. The hours dragged past, and finally eleven o'clock came—but, with it, neither moon nor mail-contractor. At eleven-thirty we went after him at his cousin's house.

"Ah, señores!" he cried when he saw us. "This is a delightful visit. Come—you must have a glass of *pisco* with my cousin and myself." And he ushered us in and poured out the drinks.

"But weren't we to leave at eleven?"

"Alas, señores—there was some mistake. At a certain time of the month the moon rises at eleven, but this is not the time. Tonight there is no moon until four. We shall leave at four—*promto*."

Laden with *pisco* and somber thoughts, we returned to the hotel. It was locked and in darkness, and though we knocked and shouted for fifteen minutes, we could elicit no response from within.

"The hell with it," opined Herman. "Let's get our blankets from the canoe and sleep on the bank."

We descended to the boats and began fumbling about in the dark. One of the *cholos*, asleep on the mail sacks, woke up and grunted.

"*Equipaje*," we said.

"*Equipaje a hotel*," he replied, and went to sleep again.

—At five-thirty a friendly hand was placed on my shoulder as I sat on my fallen tree trunk by the bank. In the dim light I saw the beaming face of the mail-contractor.

"*Buenas dias, señor*," he chirruped. "*Usted a bien dormir?*"

I looked at him dully. Why was the fiend so friendly and well meaning? Why couldn't he be just the slightest bit offensive, give me just the faintest excuse to tell him what I thought of him and his cousin and his eight children and Puerto Bermudez and Peru and South America and every damn, dumb "spik" that ever lived. But no—life doesn't work in such obliging fashion.

"Come," he said instead. "My cousin has prepared some hot coffee for you, and the hotel keeper is bringing your baggage from your rooms. The canoes will leave in half-an-hour."

And I'll be damned if they didn't!

Even the combined effects of a sleepless, shelterless night and the righteous wrath within our breasts could not dull the beauty and excitement of that hour-and-a-half trip down the river to the launch. By excitement, in this instance, I do not mean rapids or crocodiles or speed; I mean the clean, sharp thrill that comes to one who is awake in a perfect daybreak, feeling the world about him beginning to stir, watching nature's solemn magic of preparation for the sun. It was still dark when we pushed off from Bermudez' mudbank into the quiet stream—dark, but with a faintly growing pallor that lent to everything it touched a strange and misty unreality. Since there was only one outboard motor between the two canoes, they had been lashed together, gunwale to gunwale. As we gathered speed the dark waters foamed and swished in the narrow space between the two craft, and in the stern of the larger, the propeller beat out its muffled whirr.

Below Bermudez, the Pichis begins to widen and its water, clear and transparent in its upper reaches, becomes an opaque tan. There was no ripple, no faintest motion on its surface as the slim prows of the two dugouts cut it in a double furrow. We lay back against the mail sacks, watching the river and shore slide past. Imperceptibly the outline of things sharpened. The vegetation that overhung the banks sucked color from the brightening sky; presently the trees and undergrowth were no longer gray, but green, and we could see them dripping with the moisture of early morning. Behind its riverfront screen the forest silence was suddenly, magically turned into a wild cacophony of bird and insect sounds. And with that startling abruptness characteristic of tropic dawn and dusk, the sun was all at once lying upon the horizon, its long level beams streaming across the tree tops into our tired eyes. At such a time one can forgive the wilderness its mud and mosquitoes, its heat and fever and inhospitality to man—we could almost forgive our good host, the mail-contractor, his unholy machinations. Thought and emotion are out of place. The purposes, cares and needs of human living are, for the moment, irrelevant and remote. A man's function is to

LEAVING  
PUERTO  
YESSUP



WE REACH THE "HUANA CAPAC" AT DAWN



see and hear—nothing more; to be aware and—quietly, overwhelmingly—to be glad he is alive.

The canoes had negotiated perhaps fifty turns of the winding river, and each vista was the same as the last: water, jungle and brightening sky. At the fifty-first nature remained constant, but man suddenly obtruded into the picture. Pulled up against the right bank of the stream in sleepy solitude was the steam-launch, its nose resting in a mudbank, a thin feather of smoke curling upward from its funnel. From its lower deck, as we approached, came a welcoming chorus of moos, grunts, squeals and cackles, but on the upper deck, which appeared to be the section of the boat reserved for *homo sapiens*, there was no indication of life. The canoes came to rest alongside and we saw in faded gilt letters that the name of our new home was the *Huana Capac*. The crew of the canoes began transferring the mail to the launch and finally, after ten minutes of waiting for signs of an officer or sailor, we transferred ourselves too. Our route over the lower deck lay across the backs of three sleeping hogs, past a cookstove and two cows and finally over a pile of chicken crates and bananas to the companionway. As we reached the upper deck a diminutive figure in striped pajamas popped from a nearby cabin and began shouting. Almost immediately other figures, also in striped pajamas, popped from other cabins. In a twinkling the deserted ship was a riot of officers and crew, commands and counter-commands, thudding mail sacks and hoarse, excited toots from the ship's whistle. We tried to engage the attention of one of the pajama-clad apparitions, but without success; so we poked around until we found an empty cabin, threw our baggage on the floor and ourselves on the bunks. . . .

About an hour later we were awakened by a frenzied tooting of the whistle and redoubled turmoil in the barnyard below. Emerging on deck, we found that we were underway, and that during our brief sleep the striped jack-in-the-boxes had undergone a metamorphosis into something resembling a ship's personnel. The diminutive one who had popped out first turned out to

be the *commandante*, and later in the day he was most apologetic for his failure to welcome us properly.

"I did not at first know who you were, señores," he explained.

A few minutes later we saw our own faces in a mirror for the first time in ten days.

"You know," said Herman, stroking the half-inch stubble on his cheeks and chin, "I kind of know what the commodore meant. If I saw anything with a face like that come into my boat I'd shoot him on sight."

As steamships go, the *Huana Capac* was not at the head of the class. She was small, she was rusty and dirty, and her wood-burning furnace and engine were a thin gasp ahead of the junkman. But on the Pichis River she was undisputed queen of the roost, and at every village and hacienda her prodigious tootings would draw the entire population to the bank to watch her. To us, too, at least on that first day aboard, she was a museum of wonders. Pillows, a tablecloth, a showerbath, a toilet that sometimes flushed. We had almost forgotten the existence of such phenomena in the world of mules and *tambos* through which we had been passing. It was one of the most attractive features of our trip that we had made the jump from civilization to primitiveness in one fell swoop, but that the return jump was in gradual stages. From the Pichis Trail to Pará, at the mouth of the Amazon, each of our successive homes, whether traveling or stationary, would be just a little more comfortable than the last. It gave us the satisfying sense of fighting our way from the primeval wilderness back into the world we knew by slow, hard-won degrees. The *Huana Capac* was Degree No. 1, and for all its humble decrepitude, it was a long step away from mud floors and Chunchu roommates.

The most thorough inspection possible, short of dismantling the engines, required less than five minutes. Our new home was some fifty feet in length and perhaps eighteen in breadth. On the upper of her two decks were two cabins (one the *commandante's*, the other ours—by right of forced entry), together form-

ing the only enclosed space on the launch. Aft of them, on the open deck, was the dining table and still farther aft the pantry, water-closet, shower and other marvels of mid-nineteenth century plumbing. The lower deck was an indescribable chaos of engines, boilers, kitchen, firewood, cows, hogs, chicken crates, crew and smells. Secured alongside the ship's middle was a squat, iron barge, perhaps half her size, which fulfilled the same general functions as the lower deck, in addition to containing the bunks or hammocks of the crew. The other passengers, when they began showing up, slept in the open on the upper deck, either in hammocks they carried with them or on the dining table. Though several held what for obscure reasons were called first-class tickets, none disputed our possession of the lone cabin. After the first night with our variegated and hungry room-mates we understood why.

At our sandbank starting point the *Huana Capac's* roster read as follows:

Officers.....	3
Crew.....	12
Cows.....	6
Hogs.....	17
Chickens.....	Hundreds
Rats.....	Thousands
Cockroaches.....	Millions
Passengers.....	Lord and Ullman

During the day, however, we began picking up other travelers—a sergeant of police bound for Pucalpa; a young boy with a monkey who informed us he was on his way to high-school in Iquitos but who left the boat at a village ten miles farther on; a silent, sinister old man who boarded the launch, slung his hammock across the deck, and lay there without a word until he disappeared at Masisea. Then there were two or three stops for firewood, which the natives at various points along the bank had stacked near the water in anticipation of the launch's coming; and another two or three for no other reason than to permit

our *commandante* to enjoy a half-hour's conversation with acquaintances at the haciendas along the route. All in all, the progress of the *Huana Capac* was regal, but hardly rapid.

Toward evening, we nosed into the mud at a settlement called Carhuapanas, where we had been told there was an American missionary. As it turned out, there was not only one, but two—a Pennsylvania Dutchman called Reifsnyder and a young Californian called Rankin.

"Jesus Christ, but it's good to see a Yank!" shouted Herman, and we were off to a fine start with the reverends.

Reifsnyder, a man in late middle-life, told us he had been doing missionary work in the *montaña* of Peru for many years—the last five at Carhuapanas. He had a colony of about fifty Chunchos, who affected the usual monk's robes, headdresses and achiote paint of their stock, but the cleanliness of whose persons and dwellings were unique among the Indians we had seen. Among those who came aboard the launch was a boy of about ten who spoke excellent, though reluctant, English. The Chunchos' confidence, the missionary said, was difficult to gain, but once it was secured, he had found them willing and capable, both to work and to learn.

Soon the *Huana Capac's* whistle was vociferously shrieking.

"Well—er—shucks," said Herman, "it sure was good to see a couple of Americans." And we left them standing on the mud-bank, surrounded by their cleanly, and presumably godly, Chunchos.

We awoke in the morning to the sound of terrific mooing and bellowing. We were pulled up at the village of Puerto Victoria, and one of the calves who had tenanted the lower deck was laid out on the bank in the process of being slaughtered. Two of the crew were astride its neck, trying to locate the spinal cord with a chisel and hammer, and the rest were distributed over its legs, back and head, holding it down. It was hardly an edifying spectacle—especially to a city-bred innocent whose usual acquaintance with roast beef begins and ends at the dining-

room table; but it is a procedure one must soon become accustomed to in back-country Peru. Where there is no ice, there is no cold storage, and where there is no cold storage, one's meat has to be carried along alive until one is ready to eat it. Each day on the *Huana Capac* began with a riverside welter of mooing and blood, and all morning long a red pool widened on the lower deck as ribs and haunches dripped themselves dry. In the city, when you dine on your chops and steaks, their past is as dark as their future. For all you know they may have grown on trees. But they don't grow on trees in Peru's *montaña*.

Puerto Victoria is situated at the confluence of the Pichis and the Pachitea, and from there on for the next two days, we were on the latter river. It is wider, deeper and slower than the Pichis, but its banks are the same—mile on endless mile of mudbanks and low-lying forest, broken at long intervals by the clearing of a village or a solitary thatched hut. Indeed, from Puerto Yessup three thousand miles to Pará and the Atlantic Ocean, the scenery of the river banks scarcely ever varied. Hour after hour, day after day, for weeks, it repeated itself, like the ever-returning scenes in a revolving cyclorama on a stage. Traverse one square mile of river and jungle and you will find them a wonderland of lavish variety; traverse a continent of them and you will find that very variety, multiplied three-thousandfold, becomes an appalling, overwhelming monotony.

The country on the left bank of the Pachitea, past which we were now moving, was the home of the Cashivo Indians, known to history—or at least to South American adventure literature—as cannibals. I should like to be able to report that our launch was pursued by a whole tribe of them in war canoes, or at least that we attended their unholy rites and enjoyed a sizzling platter of missionary stew; but unfortunately nothing of the sort happened. In fact, so far as we know, we did not even see a Cashivo. The Indians who loitered along the bank or helped load the launch with wood when we stopped looked neither more ferocious nor better nourished than the usual yucca-eating abo-

rigines, and if they cast interested glances at us they were at our wrist-watches and cigarettes rather than at our spareribs.

Between Puerto Yessup and Iquitos I made many inquiries about the Cashivos from missionaries, stray gringos and educated natives. From the consensus of replies it appears that the tribe has by this time been almost completely decimated and that its few remaining members have retired from the vicinity of the river far back into the jungle. All agreed that the Cashivos do—or did—practice cannibalism, but only of a ritualistic, or religious, kind. That is to say, they do not eat human flesh primarily as food; they eat it only under particular circumstances connected with their tribal superstitions and religion. Cannibalism, as practiced in the South Sea Islands before European domination, usually took the form of eating the remains of a dead chieftain or relative so that his spirit, supposedly still imprisoned within the body, might be perpetuated in the bodies of those who ate him. Among the Cashivos the theory is the direct opposite—it is their custom to eat the bodies of slain tribal enemies and wrongdoers among their own number, so that the evil spirits of the deceased may be destroyed simultaneously with their flesh. The preparing and consuming of the body is accompanied by elaborate ritual, the whole procedure being much more in the nature of a religious ceremony than a meal. Undoubtedly this shows the Cashivos in a happier light than if they practiced cannibalism on behalf of their appetites, but it would probably be no great consolation to a prospective meal, tied up in the kitchen and watching the kettle boil.

During the early afternoon the launch tied up at a small settlement called Agua Caliente and we went ashore to encounter not a Cashivo, but a Californian. His name was Gillespie, he was not a missionary, and the Frigidaire in his white-painted, screened bungalow was full of beautiful, cold beer. He was on the Pachitea, he told us, as advance geologist for a California oil company that was soon to begin drilling for petroleum in this section. He had been alone in Agua Caliente for three months and said

we were the first wandering gringos who had come his way. We felt guilty at drinking his precious beer, but far preferred guilt to abstinence, and partially squared accounts by presenting him with a pint of scotch whisky we had brought along unopened from Lima. Halfway through the second round we heard the *Huana Capac* tooting its imminent departure and emerging from Gillespie's bungalow we saw the *commandante* gesturing excitedly from the bridge for us to get a move on.

"Wait a minute," said our host. "This will never do."

"But they're leaving," we explained.

"The hell they are!" he replied, and waved the bottle in his hand. "*Cerveza, commandante, cerveza!*"

Glenn Cunningham could have made the distance from bridge to bungalow no more quickly than did the *commandante*, and an hour later we were still wiping foam from our whiskers. I don't know how much Gillespie knew about oil and geology, but he knew plenty about Peruvians.

Later in the day the temperature soared from its usual hundred-odd to altitudes undreamed of by the thermometer. Far from bringing relief, night clamped itself down like a lid over the rim of the earth, suffocating by its weight all motion, all sound, all energy of life. There was no moon, no stars, and yet, it seemed, no clouds. The earth around us and the sky above were shapeless, formless, possessed of no qualities or attributes save *heat*. The usually garrulous *Huana Capac* glided silently downstream, a ghost-ship on a ghostly river. The black water swished tiredly against her sides, and the turning of her engines was a faint, far-off hum.

I lay on the forward deck near the pilot wheel and watched the bank slip by. Sombre and unreal, it slid up out of the darkness ahead, glimmered for a moment in the faint glow of the ship's lights, and slid again into the darkness behind. No air stirred. The palms overhanging the water loomed motionless and dead—the outposts of a petrified forest.

The illuminated dial of my wrist-watch caught the corner of

my eye—ten minutes of nine. At ten minutes of nine the taxis are roaring in West Forty-fifth Street. Like wild animals stampeding, they charge down from Sixth Avenue on the green light to disgorge their cargoes of ermine and white shirt front beneath the glittering marquees of the theaters. Now the curtains are going up. In thirty darkened houses from Times Square to Columbus Circle the rustle of programs and small-talk is dying away; the ushers sneak furtively up the aisle; the show is on. In thirty houses men and women are sitting with their eyes on the stage, sitting in the darkness waiting to be amused, moved, thrilled, shocked, bored. Some lean forward in their seats, eyes bright with expectancy. Others lean back, their features as rigid and composed as the petrified palms along this breathless jungle river.

For the most part they are sleek, well-fed men and women. They are the patrons of Art, and Art is a luxury for the full-bellied. To understand Art one's body must be not too hot and not too cold, one must have a good dinner dispersing calories through the blood stream, one's back must not ache from labor and one's eyes must not be clouded by sweat or blood. This is culture, civilization. This is man, triumphant over nature, at the center of his man-made universe. This is *genus homo* exercising his highest, most complex functions, the critical, the philosophical, the esthetic. Behind each rising curtain is adventure—for the mind and the spirit. There is beauty, perhaps, and laughter, compassion and understanding. El Dorado—the Gilded One—is standing in the wings. . . .

The helmsman close beside me wipes the sweat from his face with a grimy hand and spits on the deck. His tired eyes scan the dark reaches of the winding river; his body, emaciated from the ravages of fever but still strong from years of physical labor, is not tired, but heavy and numb, like the heavy, numb equatorial night about him. He is thinking dully of his adobe and thatch cottage down-river at Pucalpa. By the time he reaches it his wife will have been delivered of her brat—their tenth. *Carrajo!* Another one to feed, to clothe, to make room for on one of the two bamboo mats.

In the forests beside the winding river the mangoes and papayas hang heavy from the trees. Here, in the green gloom, is the wildest profusion of nature that exists anywhere on earth: plants and animals to feed man and clothe him, stout wood to shelter him, minerals to make him rich. But among this fabulous wealth man lives in direst poverty. It is his if he can get it, but to get it he must pit himself against all the armaments of a hostile world; against other men, wild beasts, snakes, insects, strangling undergrowth, mud, flood, fever, heat. He is beyond the help of man's mechanical ingenuity. His railroad in a jungle trail along which he must hack his way with a *machete*; his freight car is his own back; his food and his shelter he must find for himself in the same way as do the jaguar, the peccary and the armadillo. Here *genus homo* is no longer the center of his own, man-made world, but merely another species in the vast weaving web of evolution. In the granite and concrete cities, where men have reduced all nature to subservience, there is time, even among the lowliest, for thoughts and plans beyond the moment's pressing need. But not here. Here there is no tomorrow, no future. There is only the mango to be plucked, the turtle to be caught, the burden to be carried, the path to be cut through the jungle. Food, shelter and sleep are not the means to the end of civilized, human living, but the end of life itself.

Presently the steersman reaches behind him and pulls a cord. The little ship's bell rings twice, tinny and forlorn in the heavy night. Nine o'clock. After a moment a figure appears from the darkness and takes over the wheel. The relieved man yawns, spits meditatively on the deck and goes below; not to the theater; not to his soul's refreshment, but to sleep.

And the Gilded Man?

In Amazonia the Gilded Man is tomorrow's meal.

The bodily structure of the *Huana Capac* had its full quota of defects, but there was nothing the matter with her lungs. They were brass-lined and tireless, and our daily progress was punctuated by toots, shrieks and groans that would have done credit to

New Year's Eve in the French Casino. We soon discovered that they were not spontaneous or haphazard, but were controlled by an elaborate code; whistle-blowing is a major industry on the Peruvian rivers and not to be taken lightly. Three long blasts followed by three short ones signified imminent arrival at a port; three short ones followed by three long ones meant imminent departure. Three short ones by themselves meant actual arrival and three long ones by themselves actual departure. One lone short one indicated noon (noon was pretty badly neglected); one long one constituted greetings in passing to a village or hacienda on the bank; a whole flock of short ones was supposed to mean lifeboat drill, but in the absence of lifeboats was simply used by the *commandante* to express general high spirits. In addition to its usual baritone register the whistle boasted a shrill falsetto note of which everyone was very proud, but it was most capricious in its use of it. Generally it made its appearance toward the end of a deep and particularly impressive "long one," but occasionally it would oblige with a solitary peep, to the delight of all aboard except the *commandante*, who seemed to consider it an affront to his professional dignity.

Early on the third morning of our journey we could tell that momentous things were in the offing. For a solid hour the whistle never stopped blowing, the only variation being an occasional transition from baritone to falsetto and then back again. We soon discovered that the cause of the uproar was threefold: (1) we were about to enter the Ucayali River, (2) we were approaching the town of Masisea, and (3) it was the first day of Carnival. The excitement of all three events coming simultaneously was almost more than the antique constitution of the *Huana Capac* could stand. As we swung from the Pachitea around a heavily wooded point into the broad, northward-flowing stream of the Ucayali, she trembled and staggered as if about to fall quite apart from the intensity of her own emotion.

Within an hour we were safely nosed into the mud of Masisea, the largest settlement we had encountered since leaving La Merced. As usual, the entire human and canine population were

on hand to welcome us, but this time they were in gala array. Carnival, the great midsummer festival of Peru, is celebrated each year on the first Sunday, Monday and Tuesday in February. (In Latin America it is a negligible holiday indeed which does not merit at least a three-day observance.) During this period virtually all work is suspended, and it is *de rigueur* to wear fancy dress, dance in the streets, and hurl water, flour or perfume-filled balloons at anyone you choose, preferably a member of the opposite sex. Masisea was hardly a town of sufficient size or resources to put on a very elaborate show; but its inhabitants made up in enthusiasm what they lacked in paraphernalia, and as the *Huana Capac* pulled in, it was greeted with a barrage of pretty nearly everything on the premises that wasn't nailed down.

We, for our part, were to observe Carnival by spending the whole day in town. The *commandante*, it developed, was the most accurate southpaw flour-thrower in the *montaña* and had no intention of wasting his talents in mid-river. In addition to this, his flagship, hoarse and shaken after its morning exertions, was badly in need of a day's rest. We strapped on our cameras, climbed the embankment under a bombardment from the natives, and proceeded to explore.

Masisea is one of those Peruvian back-country villages which loom large and impressive on the map but shrink alarmingly when encountered in person. Until a year ago, it had been the nightly stop-over on the San Ramon-Iquitos airplane run, but now that distinction had been transferred to the larger town of Pucarpa, fifty miles downstream, leaving Masisea no function except to sustain its own existence. It boasted a population of some two thousand, a powerful wireless station, several stores (all run by Chinamen), and a restaurant where warm beer could be had for two *soles*, or the equivalent of fifty cents, a bottle.

This was our first experience with the amazing extremes of the cost of living in the *montaña*. All native foods and products, as well as living accommodations and transportation, were dirt-cheap: a meal or a night's lodging rarely cost more than a *sol*; bananas, papayas and other fruits were as-much-as-you-wanted

for ten *centavos*; our ten-day trip on the river—everything included—amounted to less than twenty-five American dollars. But when it came to items that had to be imported, the picture was startlingly different. Beer—two *soles* a bottle. Cheap cigarettes—one *sol* for ten. Gasoline—forty cents a gallon. Cardboard suit cases—five dollars apiece. Incredible at first sight, these prices are easily understandable when one considers the isolation of the region and the enormous difficulties of transportation. The beer we drank in Masisea had been manufactured in Lima, less than four hundred miles away, but it had been shipped to its destination by way of the Panama Canal and the Atlantic Ocean and up the entire length of the Amazon and Ucayali rivers. No wonder that for our bottle apiece we paid more than we would have had to for a full dinner and a night's lodging together.

When we returned to the *Huana Capac* that good craft was scarcely recognizable. Its funnel was festooned with confetti, its sides spattered with flour, its decks a riot of passengers and visitors throwing things at each other. Off in one corner the *commandante* and the police sergeant were engaged in a heated argument, apparently over a question of fares and accommodations. Fists were being shaken, imprecations hurled; at any moment, it appeared, one of them would punch the other's nose, or perhaps even draw a gun. Finally the *commandante*, who was a man of action, ran out of threats.

"*Espere aqui*," he commanded. "Wait for me here."

With the slow dignity of a man preparing for a duel he walked across the deck, picked up a paper sack of flour and with his renowned accuracy hurled it straight into the sergeant's face. The next time we saw the two together they were arm in arm and drinking *pisco*.

We tried to retire at our usual time, but it was no go. The deck resounded to the hoots and shrieks of the merry-makers; assorted projectiles zoomed through the open door of our cabin; and the proximity of the ship to the shore resulted in the arrival of visitors other than townspeople. For perhaps an hour we

slapped, scratched and swore; then we came out and joined the festivities. If we had to swat something, we much preferred señoritas to mosquitoes.

At six in the morning we blew three short ones and three long ones. At six-thirty we repeated it, as well as at seven, seven-thirty, eight, eight-thirty, and so around the clock to noon. At twelve-thirty we actually cast off and began the four-hour journey downstream to Pucalpa. It was to be our last lap on the *Huana Capac*, for at Pucalpa we were to transfer to a larger launch for the remainder of the journey to Iquitos.

In Masisea we had picked up an assortment of new passengers, most of them prospectors returning from the Rio Negro, a tributary of the upper Ucayali, where there had been a minor gold rush during the past few months. Practically all had bottles and sacks of gold dust stuffed about their persons—the fruits of many months of prospecting and washing—which they were now taking to the government assay office at Iquitos. We subsequently learned that the rumor of gold on the Negro had drawn two thousand fortune-hunters to the region between December and February. Very few, however, struck it really rich, and none of our fellow-passengers had more than a few grains of the fine yellow sand to show for their weeks of search and labor. It was typical of the ever-recurrent pattern of booms and boomlets in Amazonia. In that vast trackless wilderness only the luckiest of men finds what he goes after, and even when he has found it the lack of machinery and transportation facilities is likely to make his discovery almost useless.

By this time both Herman and I had picked up enough Spanish to enable us to communicate, at least in rudimentary fashion, with people whom we met. We would usually divide the work, one of us beginning a sentence and carrying on until he ran dry, at which point the other, fresh and rested, would step in and try to finish it. This was an admirable system in many ways, the chief disadvantage being that the first and second

sections of our sentences scarcely ever had the slightest connection with each other. A peculiarly annoying, and paradoxical, difficulty we had with the language was that the so-called "hard" words came much easier to us than the so-called "simple" ones. In the realm of Latin-derived polysyllables, English and Spanish differ very little: stationary is *estacionario*; exigency is *exigencia*; mitigate is *mitigar*; salubrious is *salubre*; convalescence is *convalecencia*; and so on. But when it came to the short everyday words, life was not so simple. *Sopa* is not soap, but soup; *ropa* is not rope, but clothing; and though *caliente* means hot, it means a very special kind of hot, and a polite query to a señorita as to whether she feels *caliente* on a sunny afternoon will result either in a slap in the face or a venereal disease. All in all, I'm afraid, we were better equipped to deliver a lecture at the university than to discuss the weather with our table companions.

We reached Pucalpa in the late afternoon and found it to be a slightly larger edition of Masisea. Carnival was still underway, but with something of a second-day let down, and we succeeded in getting ashore without being bombarded. The first thing we ran into was, of all things, a railroad track. There it lay, running along the main street and out of sight up the river bank, in bland defiance of the well-known fact that there is not a single railroad in the entire *montaña* of Peru. Its presence remained a mystery to us until, after our arrival in Iquitos, we were enlightened by a resident gringo. A railroad from Cerro de Pasco, in the high Andes, to Pucalpa, on the Ucayali, had for years been a favorite dream of the Peruvian government. A stupendous project, involving the penetration of hundreds of miles of mountains and virgin jungle, it had actually progressed at one time from the *in estudio* to the *in projecto* stage of existence. But not, alas, to the *in explotacion* stage; not by a damn sight. Ten miles of track were laid outside Cerro de Pasco at one end and two miles through the streets of Pucalpa at the other, but by an oversight, or something, the intervening four hundred miles were neglected. In the ten years that have passed since the project

was begun, nothing further has been attempted, and today Pucalpa's portion of the Trans-Peruvian Railway runs two miles out into the jungle and reaches its terminus against the trunk of a banana tree.

The *Melita*, the larger launch on which we were to continue our journey, was not due in Pucalpa until the following morning, and we had the night to spend as we chose. The town boasted a hotel, and the hotel boasted a bar. Thither we repaired.

"Well, if it isn't a pair of blooming beachcombers," opined a voice as we entered. Tracking the voice down to its source behind a large beer bottle, we discovered a young man with a pink face and a chirrupy expression.

"*Americano?*" we inquired.

"*Inglesa,*" he replied. "Sit down and pour yourselves one."

We did so, meanwhile introducing ourselves.

"I," said the *Inglesa*, "am David Ball, and I am the oldest living inhabitant of Pucalpa."

An explanation seemed in order, and after a good swallow of beer he supplied it.

"My home is—or, rather, used to be—in Lima, where I had a wife, home, friends and other amenities of civilization. I seem to recall too that I used to work for a British concern called the Peruvian Trading Corporation, which sold machinery. Ten days ago—yes, a week ago last Thursday, to be exact—it became necessary for me to go to Iquitos for the company. The business was urgent, and it was therefore decided that I should go by plane. In that way I could reach my destination in two days, transact my business and be back in Lima within a week."

"And you're on the return trip now?"

The *Inglesa* stared at us over his beer. There was something wild and disquieting in his eye.

"No, gentlemen," he said. "I am *not* on my return trip. I am still on my way to Iquitos. *I have been in this God-damned town for nine days.*"

"But, if you're flying, how is it that—"

"As you probably know, Pucarpa is the overnight stop on the San Ramon-Iquitos route. You're supposed to change here from the land-plane that goes over the mountains to a hydroplane that goes down the river. Well, the land-plane got me here all right, on schedule, but there was no hydroplane to meet it. All the hydroplanes were out hunting for an aviator who had cracked up out over the river somewhere."

"And it hasn't shown up yet?"

"Oh, yes, it showed up all right—three days later. But it had run out of gas looking for the missing aviator. And there wasn't any gas in Pucarpa. It was three more days before another plane brought it from Iquitos."

"That's six days—"

"Correct. That brings us to last Thursday. On Friday it rained. Saturday the pilot had gastritis. Yesterday was Carnival, today is Carnival, and tomorrow will be Carnival. No self-respecting Peruvian pilot would dream of flying a plane during Carnival. There is a possibility that I may fly on Wednesday if (a) it does not rain and (b) the pilot does not have a hang-over. Drink up, gentlemen!"

He seemed to need company, and we stayed with him in the hotel bar until well past midnight. We figured out that thus far he had spent only four less days en route to Iquitos than had we, traveling by mule, canoe and launch. We assured him we would help him forget his sorrows when the three of us finally met at our destination.

"By the way," I inquired at parting, "did they ever find that aviator who cracked up?"

Something that was half a leer and half strangulation clouded the *Inglesa's* face.

"Oh, yes, they found him," he replied. "But he hadn't cracked up. It seems that his wife was sick over in some little village on the Huallaga, and instead of following his regular route, he flew over to visit her for a few days. Just hadn't bothered to mention it to anyone."



UCAYALI STOPOVER



MAIN STREET, MASISEA



The *Melita* pulled into Pucalpa at four in the morning and proved to everyone's satisfaction that her whistle was in no wise inferior to the *Huana Capac's*. But she was not due to depart until noon (it was still Carnival, and during Carnival the sun officially rose at 1 P.M.), and we had the morning on our hands. We spent it visiting the other gringo in town, a young missionary from New Zealand named Pullinger. His home was a small gasoline launch, tied up at the embankment, in which it was his custom to cruise up and down river, preaching the gospel and seeking converts at the various villages along the way. At the moment, however, he was suffering from the common Peruvian complaint of motor trouble and had, he told us, been marooned at Pucalpa for three weeks, waiting for spare engine parts to arrive from Iquitos. Pullinger was young and new to missionary work; but he was possessed of the mild earnestness peculiar to his profession and apparently considered his work in this remote corner of the South American jungle neither more adventurous on the one hand, nor more burdensome, on the other, than if he had been conducting Sunday-school classes back in his home city of Auckland. I have nothing against missionaries *per se* (though practically every resident gringo I met in Peru was violent in his dislike for them), but they have the knack of lending to their lives and experiences an almost incredible dullness and lack of color. I must have met and talked with some dozen missionaries in my crossing from Lima to Pará, and not one of them considered his work in any sense a thing of excitement or adventure. It was a duty, nothing more or less, and it seemed to make no difference whatever to any of them that they happened to be fulfilling it in the Amazonian wilderness rather than in Tottenham Court Road or Flatbush Avenue.

Young Pullinger had his wife with him—the first white woman we had encountered since leaving Lima. She was most hospitable to us, insisting we remain for an early lunch and feeding us on ambrosial non-Peruvian muffins and preserves; but like her husband her interest and experiences in the country were strictly limited to their "mission." We tried to draw her out as to what

adventures or discomforts she had encountered in the jungle, but apparently she had encountered none of either.

"Cooking and tidying up the launch keep me fair occupied," she explained, "and when I've a bit of spare time I practice at the portable organ. I play the hymns at all Mr. Pullinger's services," she concluded proudly.

The Pullingers, like Ball and us, were anxious to leave Pucalpa. The local Roman Catholic priest, it seemed, was also the town's commercial magnate, owning the hotel, the restaurant and the two principal stores. Naturally he was not very hospitably inclined toward a representative of the Church of England and, being the proprietor of practically everything in Pucalpa, was in a position to make his prejudice felt. So far he had not clamped down an embargo on the heretics from the antipodes; but one could not be sure when the idea might occur to him, and the Pullingers were anxiously awaiting those spare parts from Iquitos.

Toward mid-afternoon the *Melita* cast off, amid a pandemonium of baritone and falsetto farewells between herself and the *Huana Capac*. Our new home was about twice the size of our old, but she carried four times as many passengers, cows and hogs, and as a result seemed even smaller. The upper deck was a wild confusion of humanity, baggage, hammocks, gold-dust and perspiration; the lower, a completely stocked twenty-acre farm, compressed to the dimensions of eighty feet by twenty-five, with an engine and kitchen stove thrown in for good measure. Verily, we were a wondrous agglomeration of sights, sounds and smells as we left Pucalpa behind and steamed northward down the Ucayali.

When I say "northward" I am speaking of theory rather than practice. Iquitos lay some six hundred miles due north of us, but the Ucayali is one of the most meandering rivers in the world, and from minute to minute our course would vary all over the face of the compass. In the morning the sun, as likely as not, would rise in what should be the west; in the afternoon it slanted away to the southeast; and at night, standing in the ship's stern

and watching what we thought was the Southern Cross, we would suddenly become aware that we were looking at the Dipper. The Ucayali between Pucalpa and Contamana is nearly a mile wide, but shallow and full of snagged trees and sand bars. Between the treacherousness of its waters and the crazy zigzags of its course, it was little short of a miracle that the *Melita* kept afloat and going. No scientific charts, we learned, had ever been made of the river, but even if they had they would have been practically worthless, for between wet and dry season the channels, shoals and banks alter their positions and conformations completely. Along certain stretches, the *commandante* told us, the whole river bed had moved five or six miles during a period of a few years.

Several times at night I stood upon the bridge with the officer on watch and the sailor at the wheel. The launch carried no searchlight, that long-promised Puerto Bermudez moon had not yet put in an appearance, and the darkness on the water ahead was almost impenetrable. Now and then the officer would lean forward slightly and cock his head. Whether he was looking, listening, smelling or using some special seventh sense reserved for the use of Peruvian river pilots I don't pretend to know. But presently he would motion to the steersman to move the wheel slightly in one direction or another, and, sure enough, a minute later a sand bar or snagged tree would emerge from the blackness ahead and slide past a few yards to right or left of us. In negotiating the hundreds of bends the ship invariably hugged the inside, or convex, bank, for it was there that the water was usually deepest. Occasionally there would be a soft, ominously scratching sound from deep below us, as the iron hull touched bottom lightly; but there was never a jar, and we never caught fast. It was a fascinating, almost a magical, progress, as if some powerful, kindly-disposed power outside ourselves were guiding us on our course. Round and round, in and out we went—circling, threading, swerving, maneuvering—borne by the river's current in all directions, yet somehow always northward, through dark, impenetrable jungle in dark, impenetrable night.

In the morning we reached Contamana, largest of the river towns above Iquitos. Carnival was at last over, but the biggest crowd we had yet seen was ranged along the embankment to welcome us. Though accustomed to them by now, I never quite lost the feeling of surprise at encountering these large groups of people at every village and hacienda we passed; the Peruvian department, or province, of Loreto, through which we were passing, is one of the most sparsely populated areas on earth, yet every time we touched land we were immediately in the midst of a swarm of humanity. It was a puzzling paradox, but can be easily explained. Of the 150,000-odd inhabitants of Loreto, perhaps 75,000 dwell in the valley of the Ucayali, and, of that 75,000, all except a few scattered settlers and Indian tribes live directly on the banks of the river or its principal tributaries. For these people the steam-launch, with its passengers, mail, newspapers and merchandise, was the only link with the outside world, and its fortnightly arrivals were therefore events of great importance. At each town the entire population, except the bed-ridden and the imprisoned, would turn out for the event, as well as the people from all the smaller, neighboring settlements, who would paddle their canoes into port for the occasion. Some would come to buy or sell, some to receive friends, mail or freight, most of them merely to stand around and watch the excitement. But for one reason or another they all came, and I think it is no exaggeration to say that in our week on the river we saw face to face fully half the entire population of the Ucayali Valley, or a quarter of the population of the vast district of Loreto.

Contamana was little different from Masisea and Pucarpa, but attained note as the site of Herman's first shelling-expedition. Not that the ex-mayor of Muscatine had been unmindful of his duties to the Automatic Button Company during the earlier part of our river journey. But the Pichis and Pachitea had been streams too young and turbulent to harbor the reposeful clam, and at our various stops during the period of Carnival he had been unable to persuade anyone to forsake flour throwing long

enough to negotiate the hiring of a boat. While aboard the *Huana Capac* he had rigged up a weird dredging device, consisting of a heavy metal bar a yard long from which two dozen hooks were suspended on ropes, and at Contamana, with rapids and Carnival both safely behind us, he finally had a chance to put it to use. I was about six weeks and a thousand miles behind in my travel-diary, and did not accompany him on his quest, but fully half the passenger-list of the *Melita* did. The rumor had got around among those gold-minded gentlemen that Herman's gadget was really a device for snaring ingots, and they had no intention of letting him strike a bonanza unassisted.

On the Pichis Trail, what with the mules by day and exhaustion at night, my companion and I had had little chance for conversation, but in the ample leisure of life on the river-boats we had become increasingly well acquainted. As I believe I commented in describing my first meeting with him, Herman was about as reticent as a microphone. By this stage of the game I knew the name, address and taste in clothes of every girl he had ever taken out; I knew his detailed opinions on the U. S. Army, Franklin D. Roosevelt, osteopathy, the immortality of the soul, international trade, Greta Garbo, and the health-building qualities of raw onions; I knew that he had put through a lower gas rate for Muscatine householders, that he was partial to apples, and that his wife liked to sleep on her left side. And I knew by heart his address of acceptance when he was offered the nomination for mayor in 1932.

I discovered early that Herman had a weakness for "addresses." Back home he belonged to every organization which Muscatine boasted—civic, social, fraternal and religious—and it was apparently his practice, when at home, to favor each and all of them with an "address" once a week. During the early days of our acquaintance I was several times on the point of inquiring if he didn't occasionally run out of topics, but it would have been a foolish question. Topics came to Herman as mosquitoes come to New Jersey, and I never succeeded in finding one, from rela-

tivity to Peruvian beer, that he couldn't turn into an "address." For what constituted an "address" with him was a delicate and subtle thing. It was certainly not the subject-matter. Nor was it the occasion, nor the presence of an audience. It was, rather, an obscure process that went on within himself—a sort of personal mental soapbox he carried concealed somewhere inside him and which would begin exercising its influence at the most haphazard times. We could be talking of anything—the most casual or trivial subjects—when suddenly I would become aware that a strange, glassy light had come into his eyes and a strange, brassy note into his voice. It meant that he had stopped talking to me and was making an "address." It was a fascinating phenomenon to watch, though a little conversation was apt to go a long way in the already amply hot air of the Ucayali Valley.

Herman was that interesting and confusing paradox—a man with a keen and active mind, but with little or no formal education. He had left school for good at the age of thirteen, and since that time, he told me, he had scarcely read a single book. He knew absolutely nothing except what had come within his own personal observation or experience. Farms, machines, business methods, midwestern politics, the places in South America he had visited—he knew them intimately and thoroughly. Literature, history, the theater, New York City, the places in South America he had not visited—he knew no more of them than if they had been the phenomena of a remote and invisible planet. But—and it is in this "but" that made Herman Lord the unique personality that he was—the less he knew about anything the more interested he was in it, the more eager to learn it, know it, possess it.

"You know, Jim," he said to me one night on the *Melita*, "sometimes I get scared. Sometimes when I'm sitting at home back in Muscatine, with my slippers on my feet and a good cigar going, I get feeling sort of middle-aged and settled and I think to myself—well, maybe I'll just stay in the old home town and be comfortable for the rest of my life. Then, all of a sudden,

I catch myself. Yeah—all of a sudden I remember how damn many places there are in the world I haven't been and how damn many things there are I don't know, and I say to myself—hell's bells, you can't be turning into an old man already, Herman. You've got too much still to do."

Or again:

"Next time I go on a trip I want to go to Alaska; then Africa; then the East Indies. Europe? Hell, Europe's too easy. No obstacles—no kick. Maybe I'll go there when I'm an old man—with the missus."

And again:

"I'll bet in twenty-five years I've had twenty-five different jobs. Never made a pile of money, but I've had myself a pile of fun. There's only one thing I ask of a job, Jim: that it lets me use my own brains and tackle my own problems. If a job don't let you do that it isn't worth beans."

And once again:

"Think maybe I'll run for Congress in '38."

"But I thought you were planning to stay in the button business?"

"Yes, I am—sort of."

"Then why are you talking about Congress?"

"Well, I've never been there, for one thing—"

One day on the *Melita* he was sitting next to me as I was writing. A gust of wind suddenly riffled my notebook, exposing one of the pages.

"The Gilded Man, eh?" said Herman. "What's it mean?"

I tried to explain—not, I'm afraid, with great success.

"Hmm, pretty fancy," he commented, "but I guess that's what the reading public wants, eh, Jim? Fancy ideas; lots of gravy."

"Er—yes, I suppose they do," I agreed.

"That's why I don't read much."

And that closed the subject for Daniel Boone Rover Merriwell-Quixote, who, I think, of all men I have ever known was closest

upon the heels of that Gilded One "who by the Spaniards is known as El Dorado."

Does our shipboard life seem aimless and pointless? Well, it wasn't. Through all our loafing, dancing, leaning on rails and general time-killing ran the thread of one great, compelling, dominating purpose: *to keep from going to bed*. Daily it had been growing hotter as we neared the equator. For twelve hours each day the sun glared at us with undisguised ferocity (the rainy season was still in the realm of theory), the iron sides of the launch caught its heat and held it like the walls of an oven, and we all but slid about the deck in puddles of our own sweat. But the sun, at least, is an honest, forthright foe, and it was under cover of darkness that malignant nature set upon us with her most subtle and poisonous weapons. With sick foreboding in my heart, but utterly helpless before oncoming disaster, I would watch the hands of the clock crawl around the dial to midnight, see the phonograph shut up and the lights extinguished, and turn grimly toward the cabin to face what I knew awaited me. . . .

The first thing that awaited me was usually Herman. I have always considered myself a better-than-average sleeper but in comparison with Herman I was Lady Macbeth. Heat, mosquitoes, bedbugs, rats, the loading of firewood and the shrieking of the whistle—all the combined ingenuity of man's and nature's fiendishness—had no effect upon him whatsoever. In five minutes he was asleep, and not only was he asleep but he was snoring. There are all kinds of snores in the world. There is the common, or Pullman-car, snorer, who goes about his work patiently and methodically and usually has the best lasting qualities. There is the virtuoso snorer who performs only at intervals, but puts all he has into his art once he begins. Then there are the various types of specialty snorers—the wood-sawers, the rasps, the wheezers, the stranglers, the thunderers, and so forth. Herman was all of them rolled into one. He could begin his nocturnal program with a gentle, rhythmic buzzing, work slowly into a sobbing crescendo, reach a climax in a full-throated, triumphant

blare, and trail off again into the softest and most delicate arpeggios. His repertory was inexhaustible, and the most fascinating thing about it was that it was somehow subtly attuned to the influences of the outside world. When a mosquito buzzed softly, menacingly about Herman's head, Herman would buzz back in the same restrained accents. When the insect struck, he would rise to the occasion with a few short, sharp growls, culminating in a throttled moan. Should a rat scurry across the floor, his breathing would assume the rhythm of scampering anapaests. Should the measured thumping of firewood being loaded re-sound from the lower deck, it would shift into the measured cadences of "Pomp and Circumstance." But his most spectacular performance was reserved for those occasions on which the shriek of the *Melita's* whistle was added to the lesser sound and fury of the night. At such times he would stir slightly in his sleep, his mouth would open and the muffled reverberations of his larynx would rise to a swelling, full-throated blast—an unconscious but potent Tarzan answering his mate.

This nightly broadcast had its entertainment and educational qualities, but it was hardly conducive to my falling asleep. As a matter of fact, it was not so much the snoring itself that did the damage as the anticipation of it. I was a doomed man as soon as I turned out the light and lay in bed, tensely praying: "Dear God, please—*please* let me go to sleep before Herman starts snoring." But my prayers were always in vain. The harder I tried to fall asleep, the wider awake I became, and soon the first faint, ominous grinding of gears would come from the bunk below. I dug my head in the straw pillow, held my pajama collar against my ears, clenched my fists. All that resulted was that I broke out in a sweat. That was usually the signal for the first of my nightly visitors to appear, heralding his approach with that thin, indescribably blood-curdling whine of his kind. Suddenly the whine ceased, and I knew he was hovering there, somewhere in the darkness above my head, selecting his spot. Then he struck, and I struck back, usually hitting myself smartly across the nose. Silence (except, of course, for Herman's snor-

ing)—a respite. Then another whine, this time down near my feet—another silence—another strike and counter-strike. Then another, at my neck. And another, inside my pajama trousers—

No faintest breath of air stirred within the cabin. The bunk reeked balefully of sweat and insecticide, which almost suffocated me but apparently was ambrosia to insects. Dimly I could see a cockroach—at least I hoped it was only a cockroach—crawling down the wall that was still hot to the touch from its day-long blistering in the sun. I finished scratching my foot and slapped at a whining dervish behind my ear. Then I scratched my back. Then I slapped at my neck. Then I scratched my head with the right hand and my other foot with the left. Growing cramped I scratched by rubbing my two feet together, leaving both hands free for slapping. I rolled over, and something fastened itself on my backside. First I slapped it, then I scratched it; then I pulled a towel from the rack and wiped the sweat from my dripping body. By this time every inch of my skin seemed on fire—not only the lumpy, bitten areas but the protected parts as well. It was no longer the insect-bites alone that caused the itching, but some unholy chemistry that was going on in my own body in response to the combined influences of heat, dirt, sweat, biting and scratching. I tore at myself with my nails, almost hoping that I would succeed in ripping off shreds of flesh. Downright, honest pain and blood would be preferable to this clammy, crawling, sweat-soaked hell—

The whistle tooted wildly—about eighteen long ones and ten short ones—and Herman tooted back. I could hear the *Melita's* hull scrape softly on a mudbank, and a moment later a mighty crash of wood on iron announced that we had begun loading wood—and more mosquitoes. The crashing continued for an hour, punctuated by the crew's shouting and Herman's "Pomp and Circumstance." Halfway through, I stepped on deck for a breath of air and got instead a mouthful of gnats. Trying to work my way up forward, away from the sweltering heat of the smoke-stack, I tripped over a passenger sleeping on the deck, recovered my balance and collided with an occupied hammock, and, finally

reaching the bow, discovered that it was nosed into a clump of trees on the bank and at the moment was doing service as exercise-ground for a battalion of bats. Beating a retreat back to the cabin I found that my bunk-mates had not been idle during my absence, but had apparently taken the opportunity to fly ashore and tell their friends about me. At all events, their number had doubled in the interim.

Then back on the rack again—air stifling, skin itching, blood burning, pores sweating, wood crashing, whistle tooting, Herman snoring. O fair and fragrant tropic night! O great, golden moon of the Amazons above the silent grandeur of the jungle! O glamor and mystery of lovely, lonely lands beneath equatorial skies! O Gilded Man, half-reality, half-dream, whom all must seek but none may ever find! O *Melita* on the Ucayali! O little cabin, little bunk of mine! O Lord, O God, O Christ, O Jesus H. Christ—

Yes, I know now what the Gilded Man is. He is a good night's sleep.

All day an air of excitement prevailed on the launch. (The power of cliché almost made me write "suppressed excitement," but it would have been a gross misstatement; the Latin-American may suppress some things—Communism for example—but he most certainly does not suppress excitement when he feels it.) Iquitos was less than twenty-four hours away, and in Peru's *montaña* Iquitos is New York, London, Paris and the Land of Canaan rolled into one and multiplied by ten. The *Melita's* passengers, including ourselves, fretted away the day in a frenzy of anticipation—shaving, shining shoes, packing and unpacking, or just fretting.

During the afternoon we stopped at a village called Rekuena and picked up George Bernard Shaw, who, however, was dressed for the occasion as a Franciscan monk. The old fellow had the reddest nose and the most imposing white whiskers we had ever seen, and we soon discovered that his personality was easily a match for them. He had not been on the launch half-an-hour

before he engaged us in conversation, and, though he spoke only Spanish, his enunciation was so clear and his choice of words so careful that we had no difficulty in understanding him. But his conversational attack was sudden and startling.

"*Nortamericanos*, eh? Are you Republicans or Democrats?"

"I'm a Republican," replied Herman.

The *padre* beamed and grasped his hand affectionately.

"Ah, that is good—that is *excelente!* *Viva Republicanos! Abajo Roosevelt!* Ah, that Roosevelt—he is a fine vaudeville performer, but—tch, tch, tch—what a *presidente!*"

As a non-Republican I felt a mild protest was in order and made it. The *padre* looked at me reprovngly and shook his head.

"Roosevelt is the friend of *Communismo*, and *Communismo* is the anti-Christ. Roosevelt will destroy the faith of the people of the United States."

The denunciation continued for some fifteen minutes, with gestures. If William Randolph Hearst ever finds himself in need of a Spanish editorial-writer, I can tell him where to find him. Then, as abruptly as he had begun, the *padre* switched subjects.

"Do you gentlemen fly?" he inquired suddenly.

I was caught a little off-balance.

"You mean—er—fly? In planes?"

"*Sí, sí*—in planes, of course. I, *señores*, am learning to become a pilot."

"A pilot, did you say?" My eyes took in his monk's robe, his sandaled feet, his stupendous two-foot beard. Somehow they did not suggest aeronautics.

"*Sí, sí*—the *commandante* at Iquitos is teaching me." Then, apparently, he noticed my roving eye. "Ah—the clothes, you are thinking. The *commandante* provides me with clothes."

"But—"

"And the beard?" His blue eyes twinkled and he held up a finger. "Wait, I shall show you something."

He reached into a fold of his robe, pulled out a small woven

sack with a pull-cord at the open end, and held it up proudly. "For my beard," he explained, "when I am flying."

Shortly before midnight we reached the point where the Ucayali River meets the Amazon. As was usual at night, we could see nothing beyond the radius of the *Melita's* dim lights, but the *commandante*, with whom we stood on the bridge, assured us that we were at last on the Great River itself. A half-hour later, as if in honor of the event, a thin sliver of moon—that elusive, procrastinating moon we had been awaiting ever since the dire night at Bermudez—showed itself from behind a cloud bank, and we could see faintly the outline of a distant shore and the smooth flow of powerful waters. Simultaneously a fresh breeze came up at us from down-river—the steady, driving east wind of Amazonia. It blew coolingly through the launch's rigging and into our sweaty, mosquito-bitten faces, and it neatly parted the *padre's* whiskers (he did not wear his sack for river-travel) and laid them back in two long streamers against his ears.

"Our journey is almost over," he said, turning to me. "Are you glad?"

The past two weeks aboard the *Huana Capac* and *Melita* passed quickly before my mind's eye—the rice and beans, the beans and rice, the verminous cabin, the interminable delays, the wood-loading, the frenzied whistle-tooting, the sweltering nights, the bugs and bites, Herman's snoring—

"Yes," I said, "I'm darn glad."

But I wasn't.

## VIII

### THE CITY WITHOUT A COUNTRY

THE SUN and Iquitos rose simultaneously out of the Amazon. For a half-hour we leaned expectantly over the *Melita's* railing, watching the one ascend and the other grow; and then suddenly it was broad daylight, and we had arrived. The town, like all the lesser ones we had seen along the rivers, was built upon an embankment, well beyond the reach of flood water, but, unlike the others, it presented a façade of stone buildings, glass-paned windows, tiled roofs and lofty church steeples. As cities go, it was scarcely an impressive spectacle—this seedy village metropolis of the upper Amazon—but after eighteen days in the wilderness we viewed it with as much appreciation as if our eyes beheld the skyline of Manhattan.

With a final, ear-splitting barrage of toots the launch pulled up at the water front—this time resting not in the mud but alongside a floating steel dock. Somehow we extricated ourselves from the howling confusion of passengers and welcoming relatives, secured two peons to carry our baggage, and set out afoot for the hotel. The peons led the way, first through a narrow side street, in which mud, grass and pigs were rampant, and then along a wide, impressive thoroughfare that boasted stone paving, sidewalks and a name: Calle Lima. It was not yet seven o'clock, and the stores along our route were still shuttered; but suddenly we rounded a corner into the town's public market and were engulfed in a confusion of people, animals, movement, noise and smells. Iquitos is estimated to have a population of 15,000, and it seemed as if fully half of them were out marketing that morning. For two blocks we threaded our way through bananas, papayas, yucca roots, turtles, dried fish and preoccupied, barefooted Indian women engaged in the strenuous business of bar-

gaining. This outdoor market, we soon discovered, is exclusively an early morning institution, for when we repassed it a few hours later it was silent and untenanted, save for the inevitable pigs and a lingering aroma of God-knows-what.

Our Iquitos home bore the resplendent name of The Malecon-Palace Hotel. (*Malecon*, in Spanish, means a water-front-promenade; Palace, in any language, means that the proprietor is an optimist.) It was, however, the most imposing structure in town—three stories high, built in pseudo-Moorish style of brightly colored tile, and commanding a magnificent view of the broad, sweeping Amazon. Owned by the largest business firm in Iquitos—Israel and Company—it houses their offices and general store on the ground floor, the second and third being given over to sleeping quarters. There is no restaurant, the guests being required to forage on their own among the four or five eating establishments which the town offers.

The room to which we were shown was enormous, airy, well-screened and reasonably clean. It boasted beds that possessed both springs and mattress, a large balcony overlooking the river, and just down the hall was a shower-bath that was really a pleasure, if you didn't mind the universal Peruvian habit of spitting on the floor. Cost of the whole layout, sixty cents per day each. Wallowing in such thrifty luxury, we did not leave our room for the rest of the morning, but slowly and sensuously savored the joys of what I often think is the best part of traveling—cleaning up after a long, hard journey. Off came our three weeks' beards (though not until after we had carefully photographed them for posterity), and off came the sweat-encrusted layers of Pichis mud and river-launch grime. We stood under the shower for fifteen minutes, returned to the room to dry ourselves, and were so sorry to be through bathing that we went back to the shower for another half-hour. Has any poet ever written an ode to a clean shirt—a sonnet to fresh white linen trousers—an epic to immaculate underdrawers? Someone should. There are times when they can offer more to the spirit of man than all the moons that ever shone, all the nightingales that ever chanted. Yea, verily, on that

glorious antiseptic morning in the Malecon-Palace Hotel we were two male Cinderellas dressing for the ball.

We were contemplating ourselves admiringly in the mirror when there was a knock on the door.

"*Quien esta?*" we inquired.

"The oldest living citizen of Pucalpa," came the reply, and a moment later we were holding reunion with the philosophical, but chirrupy, Mr. David Ball of Lima. He had, he told us, been rescued from his exile two days before and had preceded us into Iquitos by only thirty-six hours—a total of fourteen days from Lima by plane, as against our nineteen by train, auto, mule, canoe and launch.

"But let's not go into that again," he added. "How long are you chaps going to be here?"

We told him we thought about three weeks.

"Three weeks, eh?" He shook his head ominously. "Oh, well, they say there have been white men who stayed here even longer and survived. Come on, I'll show you the town. That'll take care of the next five minutes anyhow."

In its physical aspect Iquitos is just another down-at-heel provincial South American city, but in every other respect it is unique. Spread out a map and observe its situation, four degrees south of the equator, 250 miles from the Peruvian-Brazilian frontier. On all sides of it, you will see blank space, broken only by the serpentine lines of the Amazon and its tributaries. No names of other cities, no dotted lines for railroads, indeed no markings of any kind impinge upon its solitude; on the printed pages, as in fact, it stands alone—the most isolated city in South America and, with Lhasa in Tibet and Timbuktu in the Sahara Desert, one of the three most isolated cities in the world.

Politically and geographically Iquitos is part of Peru, and, in point of fact, its actual distance from the central sections of the country is by no means enormous. It is about 700 miles from the Pacific Ocean in a straight line and 1200 from Lima—distances less than those from New York to Indianapolis and Kansas City,

respectively. Its remoteness is not measured in miles but in what lies along those miles—the vast, unbroken jungle and the towering Andean peaks. No railroads and no highways cross this wilderness; the only connecting links are a few mule trails and navigable rivers, of which the Pichis-Ucayali route which we followed is the best and shortest. Three weeks for a 1200-mile journey is hardly a figure commensurate with the tempo of twentieth-century commerce and transportation, and when one considers the added fact that only merchandise light enough for the backs of mules can be shipped at all, it becomes obvious that the route is commercially useless. Recall for a moment the account of our trip from Lima to Iquitos, as given in the last two chapters; then imagine that instead of human beings Herman and I were grand pianos or threshing machines, and you will get the general idea.

The result of this almost complete lack of communication with the rest of Peru is that Iquitos' face is turned toward the east. Although 2200 miles from the Atlantic (as against the 700 to the Pacific), virtually all its trade is along the Amazon, to and from the eastern ocean. By this route its merchants carry on commerce with Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, London and New York, ports many thousands of miles away but more accessible commercially than the Pacific seaboard of their own country. What little exchange of goods is carried on with Lima is done by way of the Panama Canal, or sometimes by even more circuitous routes. One day the manager of Israel and Company showed me the invoice for a shipment of cotton dresses he had recently received from the Vitarte Mills in Lima, and assured me they had been sent by the quickest, cheapest route. They had come by way of New York City—a distance of eleven thousand miles!

In its history and growth, too, Iquitos has had little connection with the rest of Peru. Integrally a part of Amazonia, its fortunes have fluctuated with those of that vast area rather than with those of the Pacific coast. Originally an Indian village and later the site of a Jesuit mission, it first grew to importance in the 1850's, when the production of rubber was beginning to be the

great industry of tropical South America. Together with the Brazilian towns of the Amazon basin it wallowed in prosperity during the halcyon rubber years of the '90's and early 1900's, and together with them its bubble collapsed in 1911 and 1912 when the South American rubber trade was virtually wiped out by the development of plantation rubber in the Far East. During the last twenty-five years Iquitos has worried along in the grip of a more or less continuous depression. Its principal exports at the present time are coffee, cotton, lumber, *barbasco*, *tagua* (ivory nuts), *balata* (a form of cork), small quantities of gold and, still, a little rubber. In return it imports the usual commodities lacking in a primitive community—machinery, manufactured goods, clothing, tinned foods and so on—but the buying-power of its people is too low for there to be any great influx of goods.

Of Iquitos' items of export, *barbasco* deserves a special word of mention. It is a fibrous root indigenous to Amazonia which contains a large proportion of rotenone, a chemical compound which has recently proved to be of great value in the manufacture of disinfectants and insecticides. The discovery of its commercial value was made less than ten years ago in an interesting way. An American scientist who had been sent by the United States Department of Agriculture to study the fish of the upper Amazon observed certain tribes of Indians employing an unusual method of fishing. Instead of using the usual harpoon they spread a powdered extract of a root they called *barbasco* on the headwaters of a stream, moved a few miles down its course, and waited. Apparently the *barbasco* powder exerted a powerful narcotic effect, for soon, the scientist reported, the surface of the waters along which it drifted was a mass of stunned and almost lifeless fish. All the Indians had to do was to lean out of their canoes and pull them in. Sensing its commercial possibilities, the American brought samples of the root back to the United States, where subsequent experiments isolated its content of rotenone and demonstrated its great efficacy as an insecticide.

Within a year Iquitos had a new industry, and ever since

*barbasco* has been one of its principal exports. The world market for the root, however, is still not one-tenth what it should be, considering its usefulness, and here again, as in rubber, we encounter the bane of all Amazonian commerce—uncertainty of supply. Not that there is an actual shortage of *barbasco*; on the contrary, the jungles are full of it. But its collection is carried on in haphazard fashion by Indians and individual settlers; the amount available varies greatly, and unpredictably, from month to month, and few manufacturers are willing to gamble on a raw material which is likely not to be procurable at the time when it is most needed. A few *barbasco* plantations have recently been started in the vicinity of Iquitos, but already they have encountered the difficulties which from time immemorial have beset all efforts to establish organized agriculture and commerce in the South American jungles. The white Latin-American usually refuses to do manual labor; the Indian will do it only when he has to, and his wants are so simple and nature so lavish that he has to very rarely. No plantation or industry can function without steady, dependable labor, and steady dependable labor is almost non-existent in Amazonia. Its lack is what killed rubber, and its lack is now holding down the production of *barbasco* to a fraction of its potential supply. Modern industry is not so geared that it can depend for its basic materials on an Indian in a canoe who may show up on market day and may not.

Herman and I followed Ball around the town—two spotless and self-conscious visions in white. “Around the town,” as our mentor had indicated, was not much of a journey. It consisted of three blocks down the Malecon, one block right to the Calle Lima, three blocks back along that thoroughfare, and finally around the plaza. Iquitos, to be sure, extended considerably farther in various directions, but beyond “the loop” it consisted exclusively of mud streets and tumble-down huts, and we had had all we wanted of them in Masisea, Pucallpa, Contamana, and way-stations.

In addition to our Moorish palace of a hotel, there were several

impressive buildings, most of them, however, showing signs of age and looking as if they had been "Somebody's Folly" in the palmy rubber-boom days. Two notable exceptions were the cathedral and the moving-picture theater, both fronting on the plaza and both structures that would have done credit to a far larger city. The movie palace, known as the Alhambra, was a particularly surprising institution to find in the middle of a jungle. It is well-kept and clean, has over 750 seats, and, to our astonishment, proved to be "Komfortably Kool" inside. The films it showed were something else again, but I shall come to that in time.

The town's shops were ranged along both sides of the Calle Lima and, though numerous, were woefully shabby and uninteresting. Most of them were of the general-store variety, offering for sale a fantastically jumbled assortment of cheap, imported merchandise. Throughout the nineteen days I was in Iquitos I looked for specimens of local industry or handicraft that might be interesting as gifts or souvenirs, but with complete lack of success. The only native products that were to be found, outside of food, were untanned hides, snake skins and the like. All manufactured goods bore English, German or American labels, and they were invariably of inferior quality but high price. With the exception of a few establishments run by Chinamen, the shops were dirty and ill-kept, and apparently the last thing in the world their proprietors were interested in was in making a sale. Time and again I would walk up to a counter, ask for some article I wanted, and receive the classic Peruvian reply: "*No ai.*" As often as not I would then see the article standing prominently on a shelf, point it out to the shopkeeper and induce him to let me have it. The high-pressure salesman is not numbered among the hazards of life in Iquitos.

The most attractive part of town was the plaza—a wide square with well-paved streets and sidewalks and a small park in the center. The park boasted an assortment of shade trees and shrubbery, a bandstand, and a monument to the Iquitians killed in the war with Chile in the 1880's. But its most pleasing fixtures, from

our point of view, were four small outdoor cafés, situated one at each corner of the square. During the heat of the day their tables were located under the trees; in the evening they were moved out onto the sidewalk, Parisian fashion, and half the population sat at them and watched the other half stroll by. We took possession of the cleanest-appearing of them at the end of our first day's round, and it remained our general headquarters throughout our stay in Iquitos.

The evening of our second day in town we were invited for cocktails by Mr. Sam Harris, general manager of Israel and Company. Israel? Harris?—Perhaps you are already asking yourself the same question I did at the time. What manner of names are these for a Peruvian town on the upper Amazon?

The answer discloses one of the strangest of the many strange aspects of Iquitos. Although the city is as remote from the centers of western civilization as any place could well be, virtually all its business and commerce is in the hands of Europeans—and not only Europeans but European Jews. The list of its principal merchants reads like the roster of a Zionist organization: Israel and Company, Sam Harris, Kahn and Company, Cohen and Company, Strassberger Brothers, Mendel and Son. The individuals come from all parts of Europe—Israel from Malta, Harris from Manchester, England, Kahn from Alsace-Lorraine, Strassberger from Germany, others from Spain, Poland, Rumania and Turkey—and how they chanced, over a period of years, to congregate in the obscure Amazonian town of Iquitos is one of those strange cases of historical accident which have no explanation other than that they happened. The situation appeared all the more remarkable to me in light of the fact that, outside of Iquitos, I did not encounter more than a half-dozen Jews on my entire journey across South America.

Sam Harris was a man in his middle sixties and, at the time of our visit, had been a fixture in Iquitos for thirty-five years. Slight, stooped, partially deaf and wearing thick-lensed glasses, he looked as little like a jungle pioneer as a human being possibly could;

but he had grown up with Amazonia, and his reminiscences touched on practically everything of importance or interest that had happened in that part of the world during the present century. Ordinarily he was general manager for Israel and Company. At the moment, however, he was in sole charge of the business, as its owner, Victor Israel, was in England on vacation. Harris himself, he told us, visited his home in Manchester for four or five months once every five years. To our astonishment, he informed us that his wife lived there.

"Yes," he explained. "When we were first married, back in 1902, I think it was, I brought Mrs. Harris out here with me, but the climate didn't agree with her, and after six months I sent her back to England."

He estimated that they had lived together for a total of about three years in the thirty-five that followed. But through all that time they had corresponded regularly—once a month—and three or four times a year his wife would send him a large bundle of clothing, table delicacies and English newspapers.

"But at sixty-four aren't you thinking of going home for good?" I asked him.

"Home? Oh—er—yes, Manchester. Why, I suppose I'll go back sooner or later." Then he looked around. "This is pretty much home, too, you know. Have another sherry? It's some Amontillado that Mrs. Harris sent me by the last boat."

During the next few days we met most of the other gringos in Iquitos. They were all more-or-less permanent residents, Herman, Ball and I being the only non-Peruvian visitors in town. The members of the Jewish colony were all men in middle or late years, most of them cultured, well-educated and accomplished linguists. Standing in the office of Kahn and Company, I heard the proprietor carry on successive conversations in Spanish, Portuguese, German and French before turning to address me in perfect English. Practically all of them seemed to have wives and families, but, with only one or two exceptions, they

were in Europe. Like Harris's, the standard Iquitian marriage was an affair of letters, parcels and memories.

Among the non-Jewish gringos the most prominent was an Englishman named Thomas Parsons. He was British consul and agent for the Booth Steamship Company (which in the boom-days of rubber ran ships from Liverpool to Iquitos, but now operates only as far as Manaós, in Brazil), as well as general mentor and representative for all English-speaking visitors to Iquitos. He was short, plump, cheerful and matter-of-fact, and, unlike the Jewish merchants, had his family, consisting of his wife and small daughter, with him. At the time of our visit the Parsons household was in considerable turmoil, for they were to leave Iquitos on the same boat as we, for their first trip home in three years.

There were two other Englishmen in town: a Mr. Sharpe, who represented the Anglo-South American bank, and a young chap in his twenties who was out on a three-year contract with a lumber company and whose visiting-card spelled out the staggering cognomen of E. C. S. St. G. Drewry. The only American enterprise in the place was also a lumber mill, owned by the Astoria Lumber Company of New York, and the lone Yankees were its local manager, a Mr. Hartman, and his wife. Their mill was located some ten miles down-river from the town, and we therefore did not have the opportunity to see much of them during our visit. One occasion, however, was memorable. On a certain evening Herman, Ball and I entered one of the restaurants which we frequented to find a long table in the center of the room at which were seated some two dozen of the more prosperous burghers of the town. At the head of the table sat Mr. Hartman, and soon after we had arrived he rose to his feet, coughed discreetly for attention and addressed his confreres. "Fellow-members of the Iquitos Rotary Club," he began—

The English-speaking colony was rounded out by the inevitable complement of missionaries, but they lived almost completely apart from the other gringos, and we seldom encountered them. The Reverend Dr. Hurley, of Nutley, New Jersey, walked into

our hotel room one morning, discoursed amiably for half an hour on the Interdenominational Missionary Society (pro), Roman Catholic *padres* (con), and the comparative ferocity of mosquitoes in Jersey and Peru (non-partisan). And that was our only association with the sky-pilots.

I cannot possibly explain how or why, but there seemed always to be plenty to do in Iquitos. Looking in retrospect at our three weeks there, it is obvious that we actually did nothing whatsoever; but, at the time, the illusion of activity, at least, was present, and that was the important thing. Our eighteen days on the Pichis Trail and the rivers had brought us to the point at which such simple activities as sleeping in a bed, wearing clean clothes and sipping an iced drink became strange and exciting adventures.

There assuredly were not many places to go. Once out of "the loop" there were only mud streets and native dwellings, and once out of them there were only two dirt roads leading from town. The longer of these, along which we taxied on our first Iquitian Sunday, extends through the jungle in a northwesterly direction for about twenty miles, ending at a small lake known as Quista-Cocha, where primitive bathing facilities and a refreshment-stand have been installed. The second road runs along the north bank of the Amazon for ten miles to the lumber mill where the multi-initialed young Englishman, Drewry, was employed. Strike out from Iquitos in any direction other than of these two routes and you will need a *machete* to cut your way.

The fact that there is no place to go, however, does not prevent Iquitos from having an impressive array of transportation facilities. There are perhaps thirty automobiles in town, almost all of which serve in the double capacity of taxis, when there is a customer about, and private cars, when there is not. Their principal function is exercised in the evenings, when it is the custom for ten or twelve citizens to pile into each car and scoot around the plaza and the few paved streets in quest of a cooling breeze. Except when some affluent and eccentric gringo arrives

in town and wants to visit Quista-Cocha or the lumber mill, they seldom wander from the civilized purlieus. Gasoline is expensive (the equivalent of forty cents a gallon), and even the staunchest of Mr. Ford's products will not stay new for long on the roller-coaster jungle lanes.

The autos of Iquitos present one feature I have never encountered elsewhere, but which might be copied to advantage in our own world of colorless, impersonal machines: they have names. These, we discovered, are not supplied by the factory as an extra attraction for the South American market, but are bestowed by the owners at the time of purchase and subsequently engraved on metal plates, which are attached to the cars in the same manner as the licenses. Most of the names are conservative enough, being similar usually to those given ships: *Margarita*, *Amazonas*, *Reina del Iquitos*, and so on. But I defy the Pullman Company itself to outdo the cognomen of the Ford touring-car in which Herman, Ball and I made the trip to Quista-Cocha. It was *Jesu el Gran Poder*. Rough translation: Jesus Christ Almighty.

Ranking after the autos in utility, but by no means in prestige, is the trolley. Ordinarily a street car is not an object to excite great interest, but that of Iquitos is unique in two respects: it is purely a pleasure vehicle, and it is pulled by a steam-engine. Originally built to convey merchandise between the stores and the docks, it has, since the introduction of automobiles, lost this function, and none has been found to replace it. As its trackage is less than half a mile in length, forming a circuit around four or five blocks in the middle of town, it is useless as a passenger conveyance, as well as for anything else; but civic pride has saved it from being scrapped and found, if not a use, at least a form of exercise for it. Every Saturday and Sunday at sundown it makes its appearance in the plaza, the populace—or such portion of the populace as possesses ten centavos—climbs aboard, and off it goes for a joy-ride.

The first time we saw it in action we thought it was a form of delirium or *pisco* hang-over, for it was a sight to strike terror into the hearts of the uninitiated. Its engine lacked only a face for

it to have sprung bodily from the reels of a "Mickey Mouse" cartoon; as it moved it buckled in the center and swayed its rear end from side to side; its chimney threw out sparks like a roman candle, and its whistle was the voice of Donald Duck on a rampage. Behind this demon of the jungle the car, or cars (on Sundays there were two), rocked and rumbled, while the passengers hung on for their lives and dodged flying sparks. During the course of an evening it made about twenty circuits of Iquitos' loop—about ten minutes to the trip. Our first night in town we were its best patrons, but thereafter we contented ourselves with watching its convulsions from the stable security of our sidewalk café. The greatest disappointment of our stay in Iquitos was that we never succeeded in getting a picture of it. A creature of exclusively nocturnal habits, it never emerged from its lair while there was yet enough light for our cameras.

Foremost among our activities in Iquitos was eating. The three principal restaurants were known, respectively, as the Union, La Cabana, and the Continental. The first had the best food, the second was outdoors and therefore cool in the evening, and the third had a waitress who Herman was certain had a yen for him; so we divided our patronage about equally among them. We were still well within the rice-and-beans belt, but there were enough other dishes interspersed with those ubiquitous staples to make a meal an occasion for enjoyment—or at least philosophic calm—instead of the abject terror to which we had become accustomed. The strictly native concoctions were few, the best thing *cervichi*, consisting of fish that instead of being cooked is wrapped in lemon peel and kept on ice for twelve or fifteen hours. It is made from either *paiche* or *pirarucu*, the two principal food fish of the upper Amazon—the former small, the latter large, both good. There was also turtle, which is often tender and flavorful eating, but around Iquitos the specimens were usually small and apt to consist largely of claws and scales. There was also, of course, *yucca* in all its variegated forms, but we got along very nicely without it.

In the realm of beverages the stock on hand ran to European rather than native Peruvian varieties. *Pisco*, by virtue of its long journey from the west coast, was almost as expensive as scotch whisky, and the answer to that was, we drank scotch. There was beer, both from Lima and Germany, but a small bottle cost as much as a five-course meal; and there were a few native wines, which Bordeaux and Burgundy need not worry about as possible competitors on the world market. The situation as regards gin was unique. If you requested "gin," or even "geen," at a restaurant or café, nothing happened. Nobody had the faintest idea what you were talking about. But if you asked for "Old Tom" you were promptly served. Sometimes it actually was the "Old Tom" brand; at other times it was Gilbey's or Gordon's or practically anything else. But whatever it was, it was "Old Tom" as far as Iquitos was concerned. I never found out why, but I thought the "Old Tom" people might be pleased to hear about it.

We occasionally *did* do other things beside eat and drink. There were band concerts two evenings a week in the plaza; there were occasional soccer games in a goat-pasture known as the *Stadium Municipal* (South American soccer is not the mild pastime we know in the States, but a ferocious form of warfare which invariably ends in a free-for-all); and there were the movies. The *Alhambra* programs did not follow the novel lines we had found in vogue in Tarma—a film, once started, usually plodded through to the fadeout clinch—but its newsreels were an unfailing joy. Flash: "*Estilos por las Señoritas Eligantes in 1934 Exhibite a Nueva York.*" Flash: "*El gran Babe Ruth Hace 'Home Run' en su Primero Juego con Boston Braves.*" Flash: "*Fiesta Religiosa celbre a Madrid.*" And best of all—flash:—"El Presidente Roosevelt inaugure a Washington." A shot less than six weeks old—could this be possible? We were not long in being enlightened; for in a moment the camera shifted, and there, engaged in the solemn business of relinquishing the Presidency, was none other than Herbert Hoover. We were witnessing the inauguration of 1932.

Best of our diversions in Iquitos, however, was sitting at our

sidewalk café in the plaza—either with or without our “Old Toms-*con*-ginger ale” and watching the town go by. And go by it did—all 15,000 of the human population, or so it seemed, plus miscellaneous parrots, monkeys and reptiles—every evening from eight until ten or eleven o’clock. The plutocrats circled about in their open cars; the adventure seekers, if it was Saturday or Sunday, roared to and fro in the fabulous trolley; the rank and file walked, or sat as we did watching the others walk. The crowd was much more homogeneous than those of Lima and the other west coast cities; there was little of the sharp contrasts in racial characteristics—between Spanish-white and Indian-*cholo*—to be observed. Ninety-nine out of every hundred passers-by had the brown skin, black eyes and regular, nondescript features of the *mestizo*, or half-breed—a mixture of races that has been so long in the process of development that it is scarcely any longer a mixture at all, but a race in itself. Such distinctions as there were among the people of Iquitos were economic rather than biological. The *gente decente* dressed in white linen, wore the jackets of their suits even in the hottest weather, and smelled redolently of the barber shop. (The representatives of this group whom we saw were practically all male, for the better-class Peruvian woman is still greatly restricted in the matter of public appearances.) The peons, on the other hand, wore a minimum of clothing, went barefoot, and, while they were often redolent of something unpleasant, it was rarely of tonsorial origin. Among them the women were as much in evidence as the men and, as a rule, considerably more prepossessing. In common with the women of many tropical countries, it is their custom to carry burdens balanced atop their heads, and as a result their carriage is extremely erect and graceful. Watching them, it was not hard to see how Orellana, on his voyage of discovery down the Amazon, selected his name for the great river. A hundred times in an hour a young woman would pass us—head high and poised, body strong and supple beneath a thin cotton dress—who might have passed for Hippolyta herself.

We had heard a good many advance reports about sexual

promiscuity in Iquitos, and, being of the masculine gender, were of course not incurious—in an academic way. A Panagra pilot I met in Lima had told me it was unsafe for a lone gringo to walk the streets at night. Nat Whitten, in Tarma, had suggested the best way to keep out of trouble was to carry pictures of our wives in our pockets and pull them out in moments of temptation. And a certain travel writer whose book I had read as much as said that when one turned down one's bed at night it was necessary to shoo out the señoritas as well as the mosquitoes. After all this our own researches were a dire disappointment. True, there were a few girls on the streets who probably would not have called the militia had we said "*Buenos noches*," but we were not once accosted by any of them. And occasionally in the evening a few decrepit females would stand about in the corridor of the hotel; but they never spoke a word to us, and I am not sure to this day whether they were after our virtue or our laundry. I herewith give assurance—all legends to the contrary—that any visitor to Iquitos can, if he so desires, leave town in the same lily-white state in which he arrived.

The nightly procession around the plaza was by no means restricted to human participants. The dogs, cats and hogs of the town turned out in force for their daily exercise, and often there was a delegation of creatures from the jungle, usually with a string about their necks and a small boy on the other end. We ourselves never had any luck in encountering wild life in the forests—our approach seemed to be the signal for everything on the premises either to climb a tree or disappear down a hole—but on the main thoroughfare of Iquitos we were practically in a metropolitan Noah's Ark. It was the custom of the boys of the town to parade about with such animals as they had caught in the jungle roundabout—either in the hope of selling them or simply to show their prowess as amateur Frank Bucks—and the resulting effects were often startling. It takes a bit of getting-used-to to look up from one's table at a café and see an anteater trot by on the end of a leash, like a Pekinese on Park Avenue. Lizards and turtles were almost as numerous as dogs, there was

an occasional small wildcat or sloth, and a full complement of monkeys. Of the latter one species particularly caught our fancy: a biggish monk, pontifical in bearing and with a red, hairless face, to whom the Iquitians have given the beautifully appropriate name of *mona inglesa*. It was hard to resist buying one—they were cheaper than a bottle of beer—but, having wisely contemplated the future, I at length decided that I preferred staying married.

*Time: Any evening.*

*Place: The café.*

*Characters: Lord, Ball, Ullman.*

*Props: Three Old Toms-con-ginger ale.*

*Ball:* In a well-regulated society chaps like you two would be kept in padded cells.

*Lord:* Come again?

*Ball:* Anyone who'd come to a place like this of his own free will should be under observation.

*Lord:* What's the matter with it?

*Ball:* What's the matter with it? Good Lord, man, what *isn't* the matter with it? It's dirty; it's unhealthy; it stinks; there's no sanitation; there's no decent food; there's nothing to do; there are ten million mosquitoes—

*Lord (scratching himself):* I hadn't noticed many mosquitoes.

*Ball:* In fact, I might go so far as to say, in choicest Anglo-Saxon, that Iquitos is the arse-hole of the world.

*Ullman:* Have you ever been in Brooklyn?

*Ball:* No. But I'm sure that, whatever its defects, Brooklyn has streets without pigs, houses without cockroaches, and meals without beans, rice and yucca.

*Ullman:* And sooty factories, and sunless streets, and howling subways in which human beings are reduced to the stature of chickens in a crate.

*Lord:* Don't forget the Dodgers.

*Ball:* Give me a soft cushion to rest my bottom on and a good

cut of rare roast beef, and I'll let someone else worry about my stature.

*Lord:* If you had your choice of anything in the world what would you like to be doing right now?

*Ball (dreamily):* Right now I should like to be walking slowly along West 52nd Street, New York City, U.S.A., in evening clothes, with a six-course dinner in my stomach, a dizzy blonde on my arm, and two tickets for a good show in my pocket.

*Ullman:* You enjoy the theater?

*Ball:* Of course. Don't you?

*Ullman:* I prefer the mosquitoes.

*(A pause, while we scratch ourselves meditatively.)*

*Ball:* I can't understand you chaps. You live in a civilized country. You have decent, comfortable homes. No one asked you to leave them. Yet you deliberately head off for a God-forsaken hole like this. What for? What's the reason?

*Lord:* That's what my wife asked me.

*Ball:* Well, what did you tell her?

*Lord:* I said, maybe it would harden me up to run for Congress.

*Ball:* I'm speaking seriously. Why did you come here?

*Ullman:* Because it was far away.

*Ball:* And what did you expect to find?

*Ullman:* I suppose what every man expects to find when he goes to a distant place.

*Ball:* And that is—?

*Ullman:* It's hard to say. The Spaniards called it El Dorado—The Gilded Man—

*Ball:* My Gilded Man lives in an air-conditioned penthouse in the biggest city in the world. He sleeps in black silk pajamas, eats caviar for breakfast, cuts coupons for a living and spends his week-ends on a yacht with Greta Garbo.

*Lord:* That's okay if you're not married.

*Ball:* *Chacun a son gout*, I guess. Or words to that effect.

*Ullman:* There's one thing in the world that every man who ever lived wanted.

*Ball:* What's that?

*Ullman:* What he hasn't got.

*Ball:* Escape, eh? Yes, all of us want to escape, I suppose. I want to escape from Iquitos and go to New York. You want to escape from New York and go to Iquitos. Each of us wants something different. You, I, Herman—

*Lord:* That's baloney, boys. Right now all *three* of us want exactly the same thing.

*Ball:* What's that?

*Lord:* Another drink.

*Ball, Ullman:* *Como no?*

*Lord:* *Tres mas* Old Tom *con* ginger ale, *por favor*.

*Waiter:* *Sí, señor.*

(*Silence, as the Iquitos trolley, twelve pedestrians, four lizards and an anteater pass by. The drinks arrive. Ball raises his glass.*)

*Ball:* Gentlemen, I give you the Walla-bird.

*Lord, Ullman:* The what?

*Ball:* The Walla-bird. Surely you must have encountered it along the Pichis Trail.

*Lord:* What's it like?

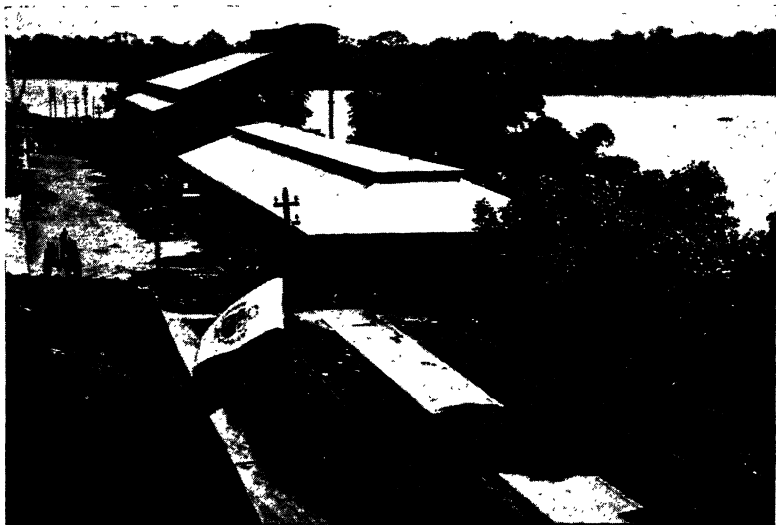
*Ball:* The Walla-bird, *mis buenissimos amigos*, is a remarkable and wily individual. He is, in addition, incomparably the greatest master of the art of Escape that nature has developed. We can all learn from him to our advantage.

*Lord, Ullman:* How?

*Ball:* When attacked, gentlemen, the Walla-bird flies upward in ever-decreasing circles, finally disappearing up his own back-side, from which vantage point he hurls dung and derision at his pursuers.

And so on, until they took our chairs out from under us and sent us home. There's nothing like a warm tropic night along the Amazon to stimulate keen, coherent conversation.

Life was not all a round of gin, anteaters and metaphysics. Herman and I had "things to attend to," and attending to things



DOWN THE MALECON TOWARD THE MARKET, IQUITOS



THE MALECON-PALACE HOTEL, IQUITOS



in Iquitos was usually a lengthy and complex undertaking. In the first place, there was the invariable reluctance of shopkeepers to part with their merchandise; in the second place there was the question of time. There were a few clocks in town, and the day was officially recognized as being divided into hours and minutes, but the average Iquitian was not interested in such trivia of civilization. We soon discovered that there were two systems of timekeeping in operation—the first, known as the *mañana* or *mas tarde* system, being of local origin, and the second, or *hora inglesa* system, being an introduction of the gringo colony. It was necessary, in making appointments or arranging for deliveries, to specify which of the two you were using, for there was considerable difference between them. For example: eight o'clock, *hora inglesa*, meant eight o'clock, whereas eight o'clock, without the qualifying phrase, meant anything between ten o'clock and the middle of the following afternoon. It was a helpful distinction and occasionally had results.

In our bouts with Iquitos officialdom, however, neither *hora inglesa* nor any other stratagems at our command availed us anything. We had been relieved of our passports and other documents when the *Melita* arrived and told we could pick them up in forty-eight hours at the office of the *commandante* of the Port. Reporting there at the specified time we were informed that they had been turned over to the police, from whom we could get them the next day. By that time, however, the police had passed them along to the mayor's office, who in turn had executed a speedy double-play by handing them over to the military authorities. Eight days after surrendering them we got our passports back, duly stamped by all four departments in recognition of our arrival and present residence in Iquitos. But it was necessary, we discovered, to give them back almost immediately so that they could be restamped for our departure. The itinerary of their return journey was in reverse—from the army to the mayor to the police to the port authority—from whom we finally retrieved them for good the day before we sailed.

Officialdom is omnipresent in Iquitos, and there are so many uniforms in evidence that the town has the appearance of a military encampment rather than a community of civilians. Four square blocks along the Malecon are given over to barracks; there are always two or more gunboats at anchor near the river bank; and there are enough police to maintain order in Chicago. Squads of soldiers are forever marching back and forth through the streets, and the sound of bugle calls and barked commands is almost as common as the yapping of dogs and grunting of pigs.

The reason for this concentration of military strength in Iquitos is twofold. In 1933 Peru and Colombia came to the verge of war in a dispute over their boundaries in the upper Amazon region, and though a settlement of their difficulties was eventually effected by a commission of the League of Nations, no love has since been lost between the two nations and neither appears satisfied with the adjustments made. Colombian maps show that country as possessing a large frontage of land along the Amazon, as well as the whole territory between the Putumayo and Japura rivers, west of Brazil; Peru, on the other hand, claims this region as her own, and, although both nations are at present abiding by the League compromise, neither, apparently, has any intention of doing so indefinitely. Ecuador also enters the picture with a claim of a large segment of land directly north of Iquitos, but in the past few years there has been less friction over this than over the Colombian dispute.

In addition to its international problems, the Peruvian government is concerned over the status of the province of Loreto itself. This vast area of jungle, of which Iquitos is the only important city, is, as has been pointed out, almost completely isolated from the rest of the country and leads an economic life of its own. In consequence the average *Loretano* feels little bond between himself and the *Costeño*, or inhabitant of the west coast, and is apt to resent the interference of Lima in the conduct of his affairs. There has never been any active effort at revolt or secession by Loreto, but the ties that bind it to Peru proper are so thin that the central government is constantly on the alert for

such a contingency. The situation has of late been particularly aggravated by the friction with Colombia. Geographically and economically Loreto could just as well be part of either country, or neither, and in the event of actual war Peru could expect little support from the *Loretanos* themselves.

The result of all this is a strong show of military strength in Iquitos. As added precaution in the event of trouble, the government has seen to it that the personnel of the army, navy and police force on duty there is composed almost exclusively of *Costeños*. Particularly is this the case with higher officials. The mayor of Iquitos, being an elective officer, is a native of Loreto, but all other important authorities—the military commander, the chief of police, the chief of aviation, the head of the secret-service, and so forth—are men who have been sent out from Lima. To date the jungle country of the *montaña* has not been of great economic importance, but its resources are vast and its future possibilities boundless. Peru has no intention of permitting those resources or that future to become the property of Colombia or of an independent state of Loreto; so the flags fly, the troops deploy, and the uniforms parade in the streets of Iquitos.

My companion, Herman Lord (as distinguished from my companion Daniel Boone Rover Merriwell-Quixote) was not unmindful of the fact that he had come to these ends of the earth with a purpose. Since the time of our arrival at the westernmost headwaters of the Amazon he had been making inquiries about the existence and whereabouts of shells, and, once in Iquitos, he went into action on all fronts. From one local merchant he procured an elaborate, made-to-order apparatus for dredging; from another he hired a twenty-foot dugout canoe with an outboard motor; and from in front of our sidewalk café he enlisted a crew of two boys to accompany him as mechanic and cook. Meanwhile word had got round that he was in quest of shells, and every day an assortment of callers would show up in our room, bearing clams, mussels, snails and such, together with long recitals of where they could be found. "*Muchas conchas. Muchas con-*

*chas, buenissimas para buttones.*" From their descriptions it seemed that the Amazon was nothing less than an outdoor button-storehouse, with a little incidental water running through. But we remembered we were in Peru, and we remembered our good friend Enrico Sims, and we listened with one ear only.

The day arrived on which we had planned to start off on our first expedition, but I awoke in the morning feeling ill and feverish. I took my temperature and found it was 102. Then, to make sure, I took it again and found it was 96. Nevertheless, I could tell I had fever and reluctantly decided to stay behind while Herman braved river and jungle for three days alone. Left to myself, time dragged on interminably. I tried to sleep, but couldn't, and spent the day roving about the room and tossing on the bed. Toward evening Ball came in and, upon finding I was ill, demonstrated true British efficiency. He ordered me to wrap up in a heavy blanket, sent out for two varieties of anti-fever pills, and, in addition, fed me what amounted to a square meal of quinine and sedatives out of my own medical kit. Practically bursting with chemicals, I went to bed and sweated—and sweated—and finally slept.

When I awoke next day the fever was gone, but Herman was back. His outboard motor had broken down a few hours downstream from Iquitos, and he and his crew had spent half the previous day and most of the night paddling back against the powerful current. I commiserated with him, but was secretly glad of his misfortune, for now that my fever was gone I would be able to accompany him when he set out again. I spent the day convalescing with grim determination and drying out the four pairs of pajamas I had wetted through during my all-night sweating-orgy. By evening I was well enough to see Babe Ruth hit his homer for the Boston Braves at the Alhambra, and the next morning I was a hundred percent all right. We set it down to gripe and went about our plans for the next shelling-trip.

Before getting started we had one unexpected encounter with the police, who—not content with playing basketball with our passports—had also been keeping a vigilant eye on Herman and

his activities. One morning a policeman appeared in our room; examined his dredging apparatus, books and other paraphernalia, and invited us to accompany him to the station house. The questioning that ensued there made it obvious what was up. Like the passengers on the *Melita*, the police suspected that what Herman was after was not really shells, but gold; and while the gold in the Peruvian rivers is the property of anyone who can find it, its exportation from the country is strictly forbidden, and they had decided to nip in the bud any smuggling activities which we might be contemplating. One look at Herman's gadgets, however, was all the prefect needed, and we were again free men. I don't think he was quite convinced of the purity of our motives, but *was* convinced that we would never land any gold with the weird implements in our possession. We were given a polite discharge, together with the assurance that our passports would be ready *mañana*, or, if not *mañana*, surely *pasa mañana*.

We embarked on our Amazonian canoe-trip on behalf of the Automatic Button Company of Muscatine, Iowa, in the half-light of an early Thursday morning. We planned to be gone only until Sunday night, but our expedition was equipped as though we were setting out on a non-stop voyage to New York by way of Cape Horn and New Zealand. This time there were *two* outboard motors—the little Evinrude which Herman had had before and which had theoretically been repaired, and a gigantic Johnson "Sea Horse" that practically shoved the whole canoe under water but churned us along at the pace of a speed-boat. Our equipment included the shelling apparatus, hammocks, blankets, ponchos, a change of clothes each, food, medicines, and a half-dozen bottles of nice warm beer. Herman's former crew of two remained on duty—two boys in their late 'teens who apparently had but one full name between them. The cook and chambermaid had a first name—Ladislaus—but no last, and the mechanic had a last name—Garcia—but no first. It was a bit baffling to us, but probably not nearly so baffling as our names to them. After a few futile attempts at "Señor Lord" and "Señor Ullman" the

boys gave up, and we became simply "Meester *Una*" and "Meester *Dos*."

Our comfort-loving friend, David Ball, astonished both us and himself by arising before sunrise to bid us good-by. He had finished his business in Iquitos and was departing by plane the following day—theoretically for Lima, but actually, he assured us, for his old stand at Pucalpa. He was cheerful about it, however, and estimated that he should be back home within two weeks—provided no other pilots decided to visit sick wives. As we shook hands and stepped into our canoe he contemplated us pityingly and shook his head.

"I suppose the beds in Iquitos are too soft and the mosquitoes too tame for you chaps," he said. "Well, in that yacht you ought to find all the discomfort your little hearts desire. Blessings on you."

Fifty yards from shore we heard him shouting at us. "Hey," he yelled.

We heyed back.

"If you're attacked by crocodiles, don't forget the Walla-bird!" And he was gone. If any reader of this record happens to make the trip along the lower Ucayali during the next few years he might stop in at the hotel in Pucalpa and see if one David Ball, of the Peruvian Trading Corporation, is still there.

Thanks to the larger of our two motors, we zoomed down the Amazon at a fine clip throughout the morning. Our plan was to follow the main stream to a point fifty miles east of Iquitos, where the Napo River flows into it, and then to ascend the Napo for about the same distance, stopping at such places en route at which Herman's eye or imagination might detect the presence of shells. As the day advanced the sun shone hot and blinding in a cloudless sky, but the breeze we generated in our progress made its power bearable. We soon discovered, however, that it was necessary to wear our hats and keep our shirt sleeves rolled down, if we did not wish to be fried alive. At about eleven we stopped at a riverside hacienda to buy fresh eggs and papayas, and we had them for lunch along with a variety of things out of

tins, which Ladislaus (by this time his lone name had been chopped down to "Lad") prepared in his improvised galley amidships. Lest there be any misapprehension as to the size of our craft, let me hasten to explain that "amidships" consisted of the space between my right and left knees, when spread well apart.

Shortly after noon we came to our first shelling-ground—a wide, shallow inlet off the main river known as Lago Despense, which our various visitors at the hotel had agreed was literally reeking with shells. For an hour or more the boys paddled about slowly, while Herman dredged and I manipulated ropes and things and concentrated on not falling overboard. Our efforts did not meet with success; in many places the lake was too deep for the dredge to reach bottom, and when it did it brought to the surface only mud and decaying vegetation. We were provided with a good sideshow, however, by the antics of a large number of *bufeos*. These are the porpoises which inhabit the upper reaches of the Amazon and are, so far as is known, the only members of their species which live in fresh water. In Lago Despense there were two varieties—a black and a reddish-pink—both well over six feet in length and both quite unconcerned by our presence in their midst. Every few minutes one of them would appear within ten yards or less of the dugout, let loose with a snort that was halfway between the sound of a taxi horn and Herman's snoring, and vanish again beneath the surface with a sinuous, graceful swoop. They were interesting to watch, but their honking had a note suspiciously like a Bronx cheer. After a while we abandoned our futile dredging and chugged away.

Another two hours downstream brought us to the mouth of the Napo. This is one of the larger tributaries of the upper Amazon—almost a thousand miles long in itself—which flows down from the mountains of Ecuador and joins the main river from the northwest. We turned off into its slow but powerful current and after a laborious upstream run reached our second objective—another inlet, known as Cajo-cocha. Whereas the first lake had been broad and regular in shape, this one was narrow

and wound bewilderingly through thick jungle growth; and whereas the first had been full of *bufeos*, this was full of alligators. Throughout our trip down the Pachitea and Ucayali we had kept a close lookout for these large caymans that infest the rivers of tropical South America, but our vigilance had been unrewarded; now, however, we had ample opportunity to make up for lost time. It was late afternoon, the alligator's favorite time for making his appearance, and all along the inlet we encountered dozens of the brutes sunning themselves on the banks or drifting slowly upon the surface of the water. Those on the shore were motionless, with that almost petrified stillness that only reptiles can assume, but those who were swimming were very much alive. Like the *bufeos*, they were anything but frightened at our approach, and many of them approached rather too close for comfort to our frail dugout. There was something indescribably sinister about them as they nosed toward us, their protruding eyes shining like black buttons just above the water, their ten- or twelve-foot length of scale and muscle barely visible beneath the muddy surface. There was no hurry or excitement. They barely stirred the waters of the lake as they advanced—a faint, soft ripple before their snouts, and that was all. On they would come, their eyes fixed unblinkingly on us, until they were within ten yards or so of the canoe. Then, invariably just as they came within range of our cameras and we were about to shoot, they would disappear—not with the diving, headforemost swoop of the *bufeos*, but all at once, straight down, like watersoaked logs. We would wait, wondering what would happen if one of them should decide to come up under the canoe, but they never did. Usually they would reappear after a minute or two at a distance of some hundred yards and begin again their slow, soundless approach. I don't think I have ever before or since experienced so acutely the feeling of being watched—and followed.

Cajo-cocha had one feature in common with Lago Despense: it contained no shells. After proceeding for an hour along its dark, tortuous channels we turned about, and retraced our course to the Napo. The alligators accompanied us to the mouth of the

inlet but did not venture out into the current of the river and at our last view of them were lying motionless on the bank, staring after us with beady, glistening eyes. By this time the sun had set, and the quick dusk of the tropics had begun. The boys said they knew of a small *chacra* a few miles up-river where we could spend the night. Arriving there we were made welcome by the Indian family whose home it was and offered their best trees on which to swing our hammocks and their fireplace on which to cook our supper. It was not long, however, before we discovered that we had come upon a veritable metropolis of mosquitoes, and within half-an-hour our persons were the rendezvous for every insect inhabitant of the lower Napo. They were in our hair, in our ears, under our shirts, and when we opened our mouths to eat they swarmed in with the food and frolicked up and down our gullets. The astonishing and doubly maddening thing was that they seemed to concentrate exclusively on Herman and me and leave Garcia, Lad and our hosts quite alone. While we scratched, tore and shadow-boxed in a frenzy, the others sat about quietly enjoying their meal, with at most an occasional languid slap at an unwelcome visitor.

This is not an exaggeration for the sake of effect, but a simple fact, and a striking demonstration of the marvelous adaptability of human beings to their environment. Whether through some chemistry of the blood or a protective process that occurs in the skin, the native of a tropical country is always far less susceptible to the attacks of insects than the visitor from a temperate climate. He is not bitten so frequently, and when he is bitten the effects are not so severe. A hundred times in my journey across South America I have seen natives living in apparent comfort in mosquito- and ant-infested shelters in which a gringo could not spend an hour without going insane.

In the present instance we had no intention of testing the hour endurance-limit. Although Garcia and Lad were still busily enjoying supper, we seized them with their mouths full, practically hurled them into the canoe, and pushed out into the blessed, bugless breeze of the river. We had no idea where we

were going, but we knew damn well where we weren't staying. As we chugged out into midstream the full moon, glowing and enormous, came up over the horizon. In its soft light we could see the little *chacra* from which we had come, alone and tiny on a wooded promontory, the tall, proud palms rising above it, the jungle beyond faintly luminous as it spread away into distance. Across the dark water stretched a golden band—from the canoe to the promontory, from the promontory across the water beyond into the very face of the moon itself. It was a scene of magical, thrilling beauty, and as we left it behind it seemed wrong and perverse that a place so lovely to look upon could be a place so unendurable as a habitation—that such a visual paradise could be such a sensuous hell.

We cruised the river for an hour, and each time we approached shore we were driven back by the minute, ferocious hordes. At last, in the very center of the river, we espied a dark, motionless shape. Approaching it slowly we found it to be a huge mahogany tree snagged in the stream, and without farther ado set about making it our home for the night. Herman and I built ourselves beds of charcoal sacks and gasoline tins in the canoe, and the boys, with the effortless facility of those who have grown up without benefit of mattress or springs, curled themselves on two square feet of log and fell instantly asleep. Nor were we far behind them. The dark waters of the Napo were three inches from my nose—a disquieting proximity for a chronically restless sleeper—but the breeze was fresh and cool, and our rights to the log were undisputed by mosquitoes or other humanivora. Once during the night I awoke to find my left arm trailing in the water. I removed it gingerly and ascertained to my satisfaction that an alligator had not dined on my hand while I slept. Then I closed my eyes again.

We arose at six, after one of the best night's sleeps we had had since leaving Lima. A dip in the river, breakfast, a few snapshots of our home (X marks my room), and we were off again. After his experiences of the previous day Herman had soured on inlets and determined to concentrate on sandbanks.

All morning we pushed up the Napo, to a point only a few miles short of the Ecuadorian border (according to Ecuador; according to Peru we were still a good three hundred miles from the frontier). We made perhaps half-a-dozen stops at sand- and mud-flats—low alluvial deposits in midstream or along the banks which in another two weeks would disappear under the rising tides of the river. We found dead fish, lizards, snakes, and the tracks of 'gators and turtles, but there could not have been fewer clams at Broadway and Forty-Second Street.

"The hell with 'em," said Herman. "Let's eat."

We made our way back to our *chacra* of the night before—now both less beautiful and less hellish in the hot glare of mid-day. Lunch consisted of tinned things of our own and a turtle provided by the household, and, by way of preparation for supper, we took with us when we left a fat and most edible-looking chicken. It seemed a fine idea at the time, but proved distinctly the contrary before the afternoon was over—at least for me. Peruvian fashion, the animal was alive, not to be killed until immediately before cooking, and the quarters assigned her in the canoe were directly between my feet. Unfortunately she proved to be a most friendly and entertaining companion, hopping about on my knees and sitting contentedly in my lap, with the result that by evening I had developed quite a fondness for her. Old Farmer Ullman had not yet become accustomed to having social relations with his meals before eating them, and the thought of dismembering and devouring the creature who was now clucking at me pleasantly did not result in the most pleasant of sensations. When at last Lad reached over toward her with no good intent, I almost intervened. But, considering that it would hardly be fair to the others, I refrained, and contented myself with staring at the scenery during the subsequent proceedings. But I had sardines for supper.

In the meantime, with the Napo's current behind us, we had come rapidly downstream and by sundown were back in the Amazon. This time our search for a night's habitation was more

successful. Deciding to try our luck at a larger-than-average *chacra* we espied on the bank, we found that it was not only comparatively free of insects but that there were accommodations for us indoors. ("Indoors," in tropical Peru, means a bamboo floor raised from the ground and a thatch roof; it has nothing to do with walls.) Our hosts were obviously a prosperous family, as prosperity goes in Amazonia; their cattle and swine were numerous and well-fed, their equally numerous children were tolerably clean, and their Singer Sewing Machine—in my whole crossing of South America I never encountered even the rudest hut that did not contain a Singer—was shiny and in good repair. The man of the house was away on his business of *tagua*-trading, but his wife and dozen-odd grown children took us in hand and did all they could to make us comfortable. It was true luxury after our night on the log. So we slept much worse.

In the morning we got off in fine style, zoomed about in a handsome curve in front of the *chacra*, waving good-by to our hosts, and proceeded all of fifty yards upstream before our motor broke down. Garcia tinkered with it while we drifted in the wrong direction at a neat four miles an hour, but it had quit for good, and we were finally compelled to remove it and fall back on the little Evinrude. By the time we were underway again we were some five miles back of where we had started, and it took us a full hour to pull back even with the *chacra*. Our hosts, polite to the end, came out and waved to us as we went by for the third time.

With the smaller motor shelling was out of the question, for it would be a good twelve-hour pull to Iquitos against the powerful current, and we had neither food, gas, nor inclination for another day on the river. All morning we chugged slowly along beside the endless forest wall, keeping as close to the bank as possible, both to seek shade and to keep out of the strong sweep of midstream. The weather, ever keen to scent out human difficulty and contribute its own tithe of woe, set its cap for us in earnest. First it shot the sun at us—not merely the ordinary,

hot tropical sun to which we had grown accustomed but an extra-special, malignant fireball that almost fried the canoe out from under us. Tiring of this, it amused itself with an hour of scooting winds and heavy waves, and topped off its repertory with a howling downpour. At first the cooling rain was welcome, but soon it became necessary for us to bail out our craft, and after an hour of stooping and scooping we were hotter than we had been while lying in the sun with our shirts over our heads. Toward mid-afternoon the storm finally abated. We stripped to our underdrawers, spread our clothing out to dry, and tried to mop things up a bit. But it was no use. During the last stage of our journey the bottom of the canoe was an unholy welter of wet charcoal, spilled beans and butter, river-bank mud, chicken feathers and well-stepped-on bananas.

As evening came on we began passing many *chacras* and haciendas along the bank and dozens of canoes loaded with produce for the Sunday market at Iquitos. Many of these canoes were more than fifty feet in length, with low thatch roofs to shelter their contents from rain and sun, and some had as many as a dozen paddlers. They made a picturesque procession, crawling slowly along against the heavy current, their colorful cargos of fruits and vegetables piled high amidships and the bare, brown arms of their crews swinging together in strong, tireless rhythm. Our Evinrude was no speedster, but we passed them one by one, and by nightfall had reached the American lumber mill at the mouth of the Nanay River. Another hour and Iquitos hove into sight—first the two decrepit gunboats that guard the harbor, then the other ships and the docks, finally the Malecon and the lights of the town itself. Tied up to the principal floating pier we saw a large, unfamiliar shape. It was the *Cuyaba*, the Brazilian ship on which we were to leave Iquitos, and it had apparently slipped by us on its way upstream either while we were sleeping or while we were side-tracked on the Napo. Ordinarily we would have been glad to see it and curious to examine it, but at the moment our only interest in life was to get out of those mashed bananas and chicken feathers and into bed.

The *Cuyaba*, we learned next day, was scheduled to leave on March fourth, which gave us the better part of another week in Iquitos. Herman, long undecided as to which way he would go once he reached the Amazon, had finally determined to accompany me down to Pará, whence he would head south for Rio de Janeiro and the Argentine. He was disappointed at the failure of his shelling ventures, but not discouraged, and held to the belief that he would find his elusive quarry in the Paraná and Paraguay rivers.

Although Herman was a Quixote, he was—if the paradox is possible—a keenly practical Quixote. Loving to forage through the queer and remote corners of the earth, he nevertheless looked upon those corners not with the eye of the adventurer or the romanticist, but of the business man. A rushing river was water power; a tree, furniture; a palm, vegetable oil; a clamshell, buttons. Everywhere we went—along the streams and through the jungle—his mind dwelt on the possibility of future development and exploitation.

"Hot damn—what a place for a power plant!" he exclaimed as we crossed Miriatiriani on our mules. "By gosh—with a capital of a few thousand bucks and a hundred peons who would work, this could be the greatest fruit-plantation in South America," he commented as we threaded the jungle in the outskirts of Pucalpa. "Those shells may be buried in the mud now, but they're here all right," he said on the day following our return from the Napo. "In twenty years I'll bet you—the upper Amazon is the biggest source of supply for pearl buttons in the world. Hot damn, yes!"

His enthusiasm was that of an irrepressible small boy. A dozen times a day his eyes, for no apparent reason, would light up with a satisfied twinkle, he would rub his hands violently together and suddenly let loose with a muffled sound that was half giggle and half purr. Then I would know that in his mind's eye he was seeing the great things that were to be done—and that he would do—in the world. The names of towns and rivers, where we were going and how we would get there, were matters of complete

indifference to him, and he turned them over to me. He himself was too busy building empires.

The day following our return to Iquitos we spent the afternoon in our room, writing letters. After an hour or so I suddenly became aware of the unusual sensation of feeling cold. There was no wind stirring, and outside the sun was baking the street as usual; across the room Herman sat in his underwear and sweated. But from minute to minute I felt colder. Soon, in spite of the coat I put on, I was shivering and chattering, and I knew I had fever again.

The chill lasted for about an hour and then disappeared, leaving me hot, dry and lightheaded. I took my temperature and, finding it was 102, wrapped myself in a blanket and lay down. But I could neither sweat nor sleep, and as the afternoon wore on I could tell the fever was rising. At six I arose, took my temperature again, and found it was 104. To make sure, I sucked the thermometer three times, and, unlike my experience of ten days before, it registered the same each time. I also took my pulse and found it to be 110, but unfortunately I couldn't recall whether this was fast, slow, or normal. The time seemed to have arrived, however, to call a doctor, and Herman sent the boy who waited on us in the hotel to rustle one up. Half-an-hour later he reappeared and said, "*No ai*," whereupon Herman went out himself and returned with one in five minutes. The physician—he was a Dr. Gamero, attached to the Iquitos naval base—spoke about as much English as I did Spanish, and our conversation was strictly rudimentary; but he examined me with what seemed professional thoroughness.

"Grippe?" I asked him, when he had finished.

"No—*paludismo*. Malaria."

He wrote out a prescription for quinine tablets (I told him I had plenty of quinine with me, which I had been taking regularly as a preventive, but he seemed to prefer his own brand), and told me to call at his office the next day for the first of three injections of *quinoplasmina*.

"As it is malaria," he said, "the fever will be gone in the morning."

During the evening I was surprised to find myself in unusually good spirits. My fever was still high, but its effect, instead of being depressing, was exhilarating; my head felt light, and the general sensation was that which usually follows the third or fourth cocktail on an empty stomach. Before I fell off to sleep I was feeling perfectly swell.

The next morning, as the doctor had prophesied, the fever was gone. I was a little weak on my legs, but otherwise physically all right. Mentally, however, I was not so good. Malaria, I well knew, was one of those tropical diseases which hates to let go, once it has got hold of a victim, and a year or more of unpredictably recurring chills and fever was not a prospect to anticipate with pleasure. In addition, I now had occasion to remember the admonitions and warnings of various friends back home: "Why must you deliberately go to a notoriously unhealthful part of the world and expose yourself to disease?" "It would be a fine thing, wouldn't it, to take a pleasure-trip and come back with dysentery or hookworm or malaria?" No, I was not very pleased with myself. For a person who *had* to be in Amazonia—for Herman, say, in his wanderings for the Automatic Button Company of Muscatine—to get malaria was one thing: a kind of heroism, almost. But for me, who had no earthly reason to be there other than my own sweet will, it was something else again. It was just plain damnfoolishness. Plagued by such somber broodings I repaired to Dr. Gamero's and received my first shot of 2 c.c. *de solucion de quinoplasmina* in the place I ordinarily use for sitting down.

The conclusion of this episode—if, indeed, the conclusion has been reached—is shrouded in mystery. I received the two subsequent injections, sat only on well-cushioned seats for the next few days, and continued taking ten grains of quinine daily, as I had done before being taken ill. Before the end of the week I left Iquitos, feeling fine, and as I write this I still have had no recurrence of fever. What that means I do not know. Perhaps

PROMOTING  
INTERNATIONAL  
RELATIONS



THREE THOUSAND MILES OF IT



that I did not have malaria after all. Perhaps that Dr. Gamero's injections were extraordinarily effective—or that I am an extraordinarily fine patient. Perhaps that the little fellows in my blood are just biding their time.

Our last few days in Iquitos were full and enjoyable. Ball, to be sure, was gone, and we missed his philosophical disquisitions over our "Old Toms *con* ginger ale," but we saw more than we had previously of the other gringos in town. At the Booth Line office we were introduced to a Mr. Massee, their regular representative in Iquitos—as well as British consul—who had arrived on the *Cuyaba* to replace the soon departing Parsons. He was a tall, ruddy man with white hair, had been on the upper Amazon even longer than Sam Harris, and was famous throughout the region as being the only resident foreigner ever known to say that he liked it there. Our most frequent companion, however, was E. C. S. St. G. Drewry. (The initials, we had by this time ascertained, stood for Edward Charles Stuart St. George, but not satisfied with so wide a choice, he insisted on being called "Baron.") He was only twenty-six, very proper, well-mannered and British, and "frightfully keen on sports." His job in Iquitos was with the Loretano Lumber Company, a French concern, and at the time of our visit had been there only two months of his prospective three-year term. Early in our acquaintance I gathered that he was engaged to a girl back in London and assumed that his plan was to marry her upon his return. Taking a page from David Ball's book I discoursed upon the terrors of life in Iquitos for civilized humans, particularly women.

"A man would certainly be out of his mind to bring his wife down to a place like this," I observed.

"Why—er—do you think so?" said E. C. S. St. G. D. "You see, my fiancée is coming down next month. Mr. Massee is going to marry us."

In spite of the false start, we got on very well. Drewry introduced me to two Iquitian institutions I had not before known existed: a swimming pool and a tennis court. Together we made

pleasant use of them during my few remaining days in town—I a bit gingerly, owing to the spirited chemical warfare that was going on in my buttocks as a result of Dr. Gamero's ministrations.

Sam Harris was an unending source of information about Amazonia, its history, conditions and inhabitants. It was typical of the isolation of Iquitos, however, that he knew nothing whatever of the rest of Peru.

"For thirty years now," he told me, "I've been planning to get over to Lima for a visit, but somehow it's never worked out. It takes sixty days by ship, you know—twice as long as to England."

"How about the airplanes?" I asked.

"Well, they've only been operating for the last five years, and I figured that at sixty I was a little too old to start leaving the ground for the first time. As for that Pichis Trail"—he smiled—"I suppose it's all right for Indians and crazy Americanos."

As a matter of fact, of all the gringos living in Iquitos, only two—Victor Israel and Sharpe, of the bank—had ever been over the Andes to the Peruvian west coast.

"All of us originally came up the river," explained Harris. "Our business and interests are along the river. We have no more contact or relationship with the rest of the country than with, say"—he waved his hand—"China. Less. Half our retail merchants here are Cantonese, but the only *Costeños* in the place are the *prefectos* and *commandantes*."

He divided the foreigners in the *montaña* into two main classes: business men and missionaries.

"It's astonishing how little the two mingle," he commented. "In thirty-five years I don't think I've known more than a half-dozen sky-pilots better than to bow to. It has nothing to do with my being Jewish either. Sharpe and Parsons and chaps like that don't know them any better than I do."

I asked him about the various colonization projects by which, I had heard, the Peruvian government had from time to time endeavored to settle the region. Harris shook his head.

"All washouts," he said. "I remember in 1922, when about a hundred Italians from San Francisco came down here; the government had made them a grant of land for settlement over on the Huallaga. There's one of them left, and he's married an Indian woman and moved in with her family. Then there was another project, about five years later; about fifty families of Polish immigrants. In three years they were camped outside the town here, living on garbage and charity. The Polish government finally paid their way home."

"What was the chief trouble?" I asked.

"Well, it wasn't what you're thinking," he replied. "It wasn't the heat or tropical diseases or rum or anything fancy like that. It was the soil. You see," he went on, "the soil in these jungles is peculiar. It looks rich as hell, doesn't it? And it is—for a depth of about two feet. After that it's just clay. In other words, it's fine for one, or at the most two years' crops, and after that it's finished, without fertilizer. Have you any idea how much it would cost to bring fertilizer all the way in here? No, it's no go for agriculture around these parts. And what else could a colonist expect to do?"

How about beachcombers, I asked him; adventurers, tropical tramps, that sort of thing? Did many of them show up in Iquitos?

"Once in a while," he said. "Not so many now though as fifteen, twenty years ago. Right after the war—that was the time. Dozens of young fellows knocking around then with no place to go."

I inquired if he had ever encountered the man called Barnes of whom Whitten had spoken in Tarma.

"Barnes? Sure, he was here—not so long ago either. Blew in from the west coast, I think—the same way you came. Only he came in style, with an Indian wife paddling his canoe. He hung around for about a month; played the piano, I remember, like a wizard, but was drunk every night he was here. Finally we paid his fare down river, to get rid of him. I guess he was the real thing in beachcombers, all right. But there aren't many of them around any more, and I'm usually pretty suspicious."

"Suspicious of what?" I asked him.

"Of who they really are. About two years ago a chap showed up in Iquitos here—damnedest-looking tramp you ever saw in your life; didn't have a *centavo* in his pocket and looked as if he'd been on the beach for ten years. We put him up free at the hotel for a few nights, bought him a half-dozen meals and a new suit of clothes. When he left we paid his steamer ticket down to the frontier. About a year later I get a package postmarked New York, and, opening it up, I find it's a book by the same fellow: 'How I Worked My Way Through South America.' 'Worked': that was the part of it I liked! Since then I've looked through the pockets of every 'beachcomber' that came along to make sure he wasn't H. G. Wells or Sinclair Lewis."

Like every gringo of long residence whom I met in South America, Harris was pessimistic about its opportunities for the average Englishman or American.

"Take this enormous jungle," he said. "Potentially it is the richest area on earth, but its wealth will be hard won. No individual can lick it, nor any number of small groups of individuals. Look what happened to rubber. And to those colonists. Look what's happening now to *barbasco*. This Amazonia is too big and too wild a place to be conquered by you or me with an ax, a thousand dollars, and a few ideas. The big corporation—the large, organized syndicate—that's who its wealth is for, and even they will have their hands full with problems of labor and transportation. But it can be done. It's been done in Africa and the East. Ford's doing it now, down on his rubber-plantation on the Tapajos. Yes—neither you nor I will live to see it, but the day will come when this wilderness will be a vast treasure-house of agriculture, industry and commerce."

"Well, I'm glad I got a look at it before the rush," I commented.

"Confidentially, so am I," he said.

The *Cuyaba's* whistle was just as active, and much louder than the *Huana Capac's* or the *Melita's*. It awoke us at six in the

morning of our day of departure from Iquitos and never stopped until we were well on our way at eleven. The dock, when we reached it with our peons and baggage, was a welter of color, noise and confusion; according to the invariable South American custom, everyone in town had come to see everyone else off, regardless of whether or not he knew him. A dozen times in an hour we were bade an affectionate farewell—three pats on the right shoulder, three on the left—by excited gentlemen we had never laid eyes on before.

The gringo colony was out in force, too, most of them to bid Parsons and his family good-by.

"Watch out for the rats," Massee admonished us. "The *Cuyaba's* rats are guaranteed to be the biggest and hungriest in the world."

"I hope you have some food of your own with you," said Drewry. "The *Cuyaba's* meals are the worst you'll ever taste."

"Got your insect powder along?" inquired Sharpe. "The spiders and roaches on the *Cuyaba* are terrible."

"Bon voyage!" all three concluded in unison.

Sam Harris came over and shook my hand.

"Well—good-by, beachcomber," he said.

"Beachcomber?"

"Yes—I'm on to you all right. Every chap who's come through here in the last ten years claiming to be a beachcomber has turned out to be a writer. You claim to be a writer; so I guess I've found the real thing at last."

Extra-special blasts of the whistle. Answering reverberations from the barnyard on the lower deck. Officers shouting orders and stewards clanging bells. Claps on the shoulders, kisses, tears, waving hands—palm upward—on the receding dock. "Adios—adios—"

The City Without a Country disappeared in our wake. Herman and I walked forward and stood near the *Cuyaba's* prow, watching the stretches of the river open out before us.

"It's a long way to Tipperary," he said.

"Twenty-two hundred miles. Right across the continent."

Apparently the prospect pleased him. For the Quixote twinkle had come to his eye, he was rubbing his hands furiously, and that half giggle, half purr was rumbling in his throat.

"Hot diggety-dog—haven't had so much fun since I had the measles!" quoth the former mayor of Muscatine.

## IX

### THE BLOOD STREAM OF A CONTINENT

ANY ATTEMPT to set down the events of our two weeks' voyage down the Amazon in accurate chronological sequence would be impossible. True, the sun rose and set as usual, and the wall-calendar in the purser's cabin changed numbers occasionally. But aside from these phenomena, and a three-day stopover in Manáos, there was absolutely nothing to distinguish one day from the next, and such a distinction in this record would be arbitrary and false. If, therefore, the narrative in the following pages exhibits a bewildering tendency to go 'round and around, be assured that it is a tendency it shares with the actual routine of life on the Amazon and that, also like it, it will come out in Pará—eventually. No, our steamship voyage across the continent was made without benefit of man's intricate and artificial chronology of minutes, hours and days. Time, like the river, did not concern itself greatly with beginnings, middles, and ends, sections and divisions. It just kept rolling along.

Had we been traveling on the *Cuyaba* in the opposite direction and boarded it fresh from an Atlantic liner, we would probably not have considered it quite the last word in water transportation; but coming to it by way of mule-back, the *Huana Capac*, *Melita* and Malecon-Palace, we could not have been more impressed with our new-found luxury if we had been assigned the de luxe suite on the *Queen Mary*. In addition to this pleasant illusion the direction of our voyage had another advantage: the trip upstream from Pará to Iquitos requires the better part of a month, whereas the trip downstream requires but half that time. A fortnight of muddy waters and everlasting forested banks is ample for the average traveler. Drewry, Massee and other gringos

who had recently made the trip up spoke of their thirty consecutive Amazonian nights with a haunted glint in their eyes.

But to return to the luxuries of the *Cuyaba*: it numbered among its impressive features a promenade deck, comfortable chairs, cabins with running water, a bar, and officers in regulation white uniforms, although we subsequently discovered that the last made their appearance only on very special occasions, such as sailing, landing, and Sundays. The ship was capable of a speed of about ten knots, downstream—about twice the pace of the *Melita*—and accomplished it, once we were away from ports and admiring crowds, with a minimum of sound and fury. Built especially for the Amazon service, she was broad and flat-bottomed, the better to avoid sandbars and the better to slide off them when she couldn't avoid them. Like the smaller ships, her lower deck was open on all sides, and also like them—though on a grander scale—its contents were a compendium of the fauna, flora, humanity, colors, sounds and smells of Amazonia. There were pigs, cows and chickens by the hundred—our lunches and dinners for many days to come. There were parrots, monkeys, and dozens of enormous turtles, who slid back and forth across the deck with a mighty crashing of shells whenever the ship made a slight pitch or roll. There were great gummy balls of raw rubber, piles of odoriferous *barbasco* and dried fish, stacks of sugar cane, bins of Brazil nuts, sacks of coffee—a complete museum of tropical produce. And somehow, among all this, there was still space for the ship's engines, the huge supplies of firewood, the kitchen, and the sleeping quarters of the crew and third-class passengers. I did not wait at the end of the voyage to see how the conglomeration was unloaded, but it must have been done with the aid of a can-opener and a pair of pliers.

On the upper deck there was less chaos but almost as much crowding. All eighteen of the first-class cabins were occupied when we left Iquitos, but that did not deter more and still more passengers from coming aboard at every stop and piling in with the original occupants. Herman and I began the trip as sole proprietors of our six-by-four cubicle, but long before reaching

Manáos we had acquired three roommates: a Peruvian detective, a Brazilian lawyer, and the latter's tame but decidedly un-ship-broken marmoset. By this time, however, we had adopted the admirable Brazilian custom of sleeping on deck in our hammocks, and our only visits to our cabin were for the purpose of washing or determining which of our articles of clothing the rats had had for breakfast.

During the early part of the trip most of our fellow-passengers were Peruvian, but they began disappearing as we neared the frontier, to be replaced by oncoming Brazilians. Only seven passengers, in addition to ourselves, made the entire journey from Iquitos to Pará. The officers and crew of the *Cuyaba* were all Brazilian, and exhibited the astonishingly scrambled racial mixture characteristic of the people of that country. There were whites, Negroes and Indians, mulattoes (half-white and half-negro), *mamelukes* (half-white and half-Indian), *cafuzos* (half-Indian and half-negro), as well as all varieties of sub-mixtures of these primary mixtures. A Brazilian of a single racial strain is a rare phenomenon, particularly in the tropical northern section of the country, where constant interbreeding between Europeans, Africans and aborigines has been going on for four centuries. The officers of the *Cuyaba*, however, if not pure white, were all on the whitish side of the fence. The *commandante* had a pink face, white, unruly hair, and must in an earlier incarnation have been a Roman Senator. The chief engineer had the coloring of a Swede and the features of an Indian. The purser, I could swear, was Jewish, with perhaps a slight admixture of Hottentot. The doctor was notable chiefly for the fact that she was a female.

Besides Herman and myself there were two gringo units on the boat: the Parsons—husband, wife and daughter—and a French couple called Boucher. The latter, at the time we met them, were none too well disposed toward Iquitos, the Amazon, or the world in general. They had come out from France only two months previously, he having been engaged for a position with the Loretano Lumber Company (the same outfit as that for which Drewry worked); but he had almost immediately had a

quarrel with his boss—another Frenchman—and was now on his way back home. It was understandable that the voyage was not quite a joy-ride for a man who was in the process of completing a four-month, ten-thousand-mile trip for a six weeks' job. But his spirits seemed to improve as we slowly moved farther away from the Malecon-Palace and nearer to the Champs Elysées.

There are perhaps a dozen rivers in the world that are over two thousand miles long, and even these giants among inland waters are ordinarily not navigable beyond a thousand, or at most fifteen hundred miles from their mouths. But not only is the Amazon not an ordinary river; it is not an ordinary giant. Two thousand miles from its destination in the Atlantic Ocean, with three-quarters of the width of a continent still before it, it is already a mighty stream over a mile in width and deep enough, except at the very end of the dry season, for the passage of ocean liners. By the time it reaches the frontier between Peru and Brazil, it has received and absorbed into itself the waters of a dozen tributaries which, if they were not dwarfed by the main stream, would themselves rank among the great rivers of the world. The Marañón, the Huallaga, the Ucayali, the Napo and the Javary are streams which individually are over a thousand miles in length; with their tributaries and sub-tributaries they drain areas of hundreds of thousands of square miles in Peru, Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador; and all that they accumulate they bring to the mother Amazon.

As already narrated, we had encountered one group of its affluents when within a hundred miles of the Pacific and followed them for twelve hundred miles before we reached the main river near Iquitos. First there had been the rushing mountain streams of the Andean slopes near Tarma; then the clear, swift-flowing Pichis, navigable for canoes; then the larger Pachitea; and finally the Ucayali, itself a greater river than any in the United States with the exception of the Mississippi-Missouri. Now at last we were on the Amazon itself and though we had covered a distance

equal to the length of five Hudson Rivers, we still had eight Hudson Rivers between us and Pará.

The Amazon, during our first few days upon it, was like, and at the same time unlike, the Ucayali. Its waters were the same opaque yellow-brown; its banks presented the same endless, changeless sweep of impenetrable forest. But its windings were less cramped and tortuous than those of its great tributary, and its current flowed with heightened strength and purpose. No wider and but little deeper here in its upper reaches than the Ucayali is at its mouth, one had only to take the most casual glance at it to tell that it was the main stream and the other the tributary. There was only one place to which it could be flowing, one reservoir vast enough to receive its accumulated mass and power; and that was the ocean.

Although it passes through one of the least-known and most sparsely inhabited areas in the world today, the Amazon, like the west coast of Peru, was known to white men long before the first settlers had come to the eastern seaboard of the United States. Its mouth was discovered by the Portuguese, Vincente Pinzón, less than eight years after the first voyage of Columbus, and was named by him, with noteworthy unoriginality, the Rio Grande. Pinzón did not venture more than a few miles upstream, but provided a thoroughly appropriate beginning to the European invasion of South America by raiding whatever Indian villages he encountered, slaughtering those inhabitants who offered resistance, and carrying the rest back to Portugal as slaves. This was the first that the civilized world heard of the great river, but its true discovery was not made until forty years later. This was accomplished by a Spaniard, Francisco de Orellana, and is, strangely enough, both one of the greatest and one of the least-known feats in the history of exploration.

In 1541 Gonzalo Pizarro, brother of the conqueror of Peru, set out from Quito, in Ecuador, with a vast company of soldiers and Indian slaves in quest of El Dorado, the Gilded Man of Manoa. His route lay to the east, down the inner slopes of the Andes and through the thick, humid jungles near the headwaters

of what is now called the Napo River. After six months, however, hunger and disease had so decimated his force that it was unable to proceed farther, and Pizarro ordered his lieutenant, Orellana, to proceed down the Napo in a small ship they had built, in quest of food. While the others encamped where they were, Orellana and fifty men set off downstream, searching for provisions on the same banks along which, four hundred years later, Herman and I stalked the wily clam on behalf of the Automatic Button Company of Muscatine, Iowa. But success crowned their efforts no more than it did ours, and gradually the current carried the ship to the mouth of the Napo and out into the main stream of the Amazon. By this time two months had passed, they still had not found the food they sought, and it would have taken another five months to battle their way back to the main body of the expedition against the swift current and rapids of the Napo. They had no idea where the great river on which they found themselves might lead, but they decided to cast their lot with it and follow it to its end. Beset by incredible hardships and difficulties—hunger, disease, Indian attacks, everything which the wildest jungle in the world had at its command to defeat them—they yet made the voyage to the Atlantic with the loss of less than a half-dozen men. The passage of the Amazon itself required eight months, the crossing of the continent a year and a half.

Little is known of the life or character of Orellana, but he must have been a remarkable leader to conduct a small and wretchedly equipped band of men across an utterly unknown continent. He was also, apparently, a man of lively imagination—a quality not rare among explorers and travelers of all times—for in his subsequent account of the voyage he described his vessel as having been attacked by a tribe of female warriors, all over six feet in height and more ferocious than any mere men he encountered. Whether he was believed or not, the legend stuck in men's minds, and within a few years Pinzón's *Rio Grande* had been forgotten and the great river was known to the world as *Amazonas*: the Amazon.

(Gonzalo Pizarro, incidentally, eventually struggled back to Quito from the point at which Orellana had left him, but only after three-quarters of his men had perished.)

The history of the Amazon for the next three hundred years is largely the story of protracted dispute between the Spaniards and the Portuguese over boundaries and territorial rights. In 1637 Pedro de Texeira, a Portuguese, made the first ascent of the river along its whole length and set the boundary at approximately the point at which Peru and Brazil meet today; but in the intervening years it has changed frequently, the Spaniards in Peru pressing constantly to the east and the Portuguese in Brazil seeking to expand toward the west. But, as is usually the case in the settling of a new country, the *Conquistadores* and important merchants stayed close to the easy riches of the coasts, and left the exploration of the interior to lone adventurers and missionaries. It was one of the latter, a Jesuit priest from Bohemia named Samuel Fritz, who did more to open the upper Amazon to world trade than anyone before or since. For thirty-eight years, from 1686 to 1724, he traversed enormous areas in eastern Peru and western Brazil, founding missions, baptizing Indians, and exploring the most remote rivers and jungles of the continent, and throughout it all found time to keep a detailed and accurate record of his wanderings and activities. His principal mission, which he called San Joaquim, was located not far from the site of present-day Iquitos and was the earliest headquarters for explorers and traders penetrating into western Amazonia.

During the last two centuries all the tributaries and important sub-tributaries of the Amazon have been explored, and most of them have been charted for at least part of their courses. One of the last to be investigated was the so-called River of Doubt, an affluent of the Madeira, which Theodore Roosevelt visited with a large expedition in 1913 and which subsequently was renamed Rio Roosevelt in his honor. (Incidentally, it is generally believed that a fever, which the former President caught on this expedition and which he never wholly shook off, was an important factor in hastening his death several years later.) In the

past twenty years, South American exploration has turned from the rivers to the vast jungles which lie between them, but so far only the bare surface of the wilderness has been scratched. Though an occasional airplane passes over it and an occasional expedition penetrates some new area, the interior of the great forest domain is little better known today than it was when Orellana nosed his ship along its dark banks. The map of tropical South America is still, in effect, simply a map of the Amazon river system; between the thin, winding ribbons of its streams spread thousands of miles of forest which no man has ever seen.

During the first few days of our journey the *Cuyaba* averaged three or four stops a day. First of these after leaving Iquitos was the sawmill of the Astoria Lumber Company, some thirty miles downstream, where we loaded several thousand feet of mahogany. Mr. Hartman, the lone Iquitian Yankee, was on hand to direct the loading, looking most un-tropical in a blue serge suit and with an umbrella over his arm. Anchored alongside the bank were dozens of rafts of mahogany and tropical-cedar logs—the principal commercial woods of the upper Amazon—waiting to be cut and graded in the mill. The Astoria, like all the commercial and manufacturing concerns in the region, does not collect its own raw material, but is dependent for it on Indian and *mestizo* traders. These traders ply up and down the main river and its tributaries, collect trees which have been felled by settlers or Indians along the banks, and, tying them into rafts, float them down to the Astoria or Loretano companies at Iquitos. A few attempts have been made in the past to establish mahogany and cedar plantations, but they met with the usual failure of such ventures in Amazonia. All the timber now being exported is secured from trees growing wild in the jungle, and, although the potential supply is enormous, actual deliveries to the mill are sporadic and uncertain.

A few hours after leaving the mill the *Cuyaba* passed the mouth of the Napo and the tagua-trader's *chacra* where we had spent the second night of our canoe-trip; but it was almost mid-

night before we made our next stop. This was at San Pablo, a leper-colony maintained by the Peruvian government. The ship did not go alongside the bank here—a thoroughly agreeable omission to most of the passengers—but anchored some fifty yards offshore, while a canoe came out from land with outgoing produce and returned with incoming supplies.

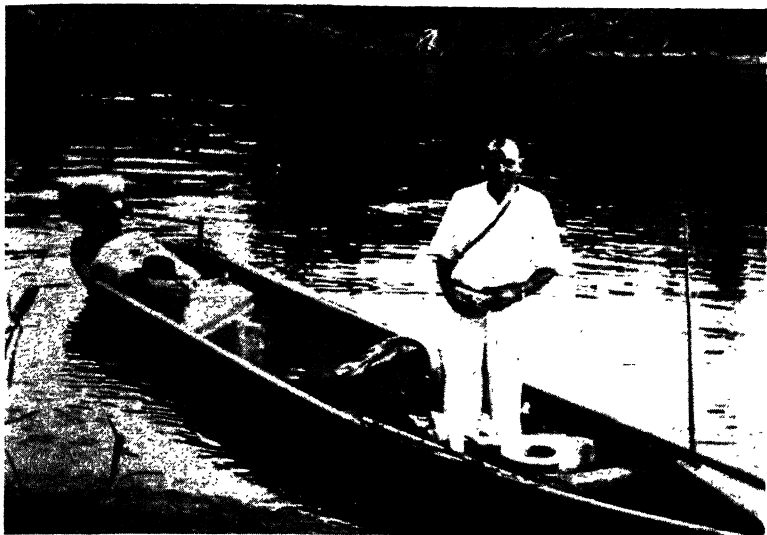
Upon awakening the next morning we found we had made the first of our many halts for firewood, or *lenya* as it is known along the Amazon. The *Cuyaba*, having a larger storage capacity, did not have to stop for fuel so often as the *Huana Capac* and *Melita* (there were only eight loadings during the entire trip), but when it did load it was a major operation. Its engines, when running at top speed, consumed twelve thousand small logs a day, which meant that we took on twenty thousand or more every time we stopped to replenish the supply. At the haciendas where we loaded, the wood was invariably piled as near the river bank as possible, and there were usually between twenty and thirty peons on hand to carry it aboard. But each peon carried only ten logs at a time, and the going was slow in the thick mud of the bank and across the single board that served as the *Cuyaba's* gangway. Thirty men times ten logs, times two minutes per round-trip—. Well, anyhow, each loading required anywhere from four to six hours.

Toward evening of the second day we approached the international frontier, or rather the first of a complex scramble of frontiers which entangle themselves in the course of the Amazon about two hundred miles east of Iquitos. It is at this point that Peru, Brazil and Colombia come together—the last-named being present by virtue of the much-disputed "Leticia Corridor"—with the international port of Victoria, under League of Nations mandate, thrown in for good measure. For the next twenty-four hours the *Cuyaba's* course was an exercise in plane geometry, as we circled, crisscrossed and back-tracked between the various ports, and it was doubtful if even the captain knew what country we were in at any given moment. The first stop was Ramon

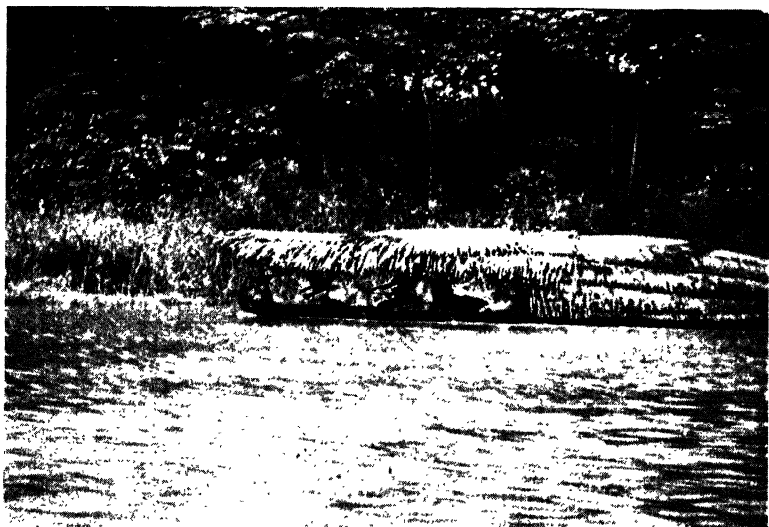
Castilla, the Peruvian military base and customs station on the south bank of the river, where passports were stamped and suspected gold-smugglers were given a thorough once-over. These formalities over, we crossed to the north bank and the town of Leticia, Colombia's only port on the Amazon. This territory used to be Peruvian, and Peru still claims it as its own, but since 1930 Colombia has had the upper hand in the dispute, and for the time being, at least, its flag flies over the city and its soldiers patrol the streets. What makes this argument between the two nations more difficult of satisfactory settlement is the fact that the natives of Leticia and the surrounding area do not themselves particularly care to which they belong. Their home is equally remote and cut off from both the main part of Peru and the main part of Colombia; they have little intercourse with the capitals or governments of either country and consider themselves *Loretanos*, or natives of Loreto, rather than either Peruvians or Colombians. Theirs is the role of neutral bystander while the two Republics to the northwest and the southwest fight over them.

From Leticia the *Cuyaba's* dizzy course doubled back upon itself, and we returned about ten miles upstream to Victoria, the international port. This town, too, was Peruvian until 1930, when it was ceded to Colombia by the Solomon-Lozano Treaty. In 1933, however, Peruvian troops crossed the Amazon and retook it, and the two nations were on the verge of war until the League of Nations patched up a compromise and established Victoria as a neutral zone. At the present time it is governed by three commissioners—one from Peru, one from Colombia, and one an outsider appointed by the League.

At Leticia and Victoria there were no formalities—only loading and unloading—but at the next port, Tabatinga, we were back again in the zone of passports and inspectors. This is the Brazilian military outpost on the north bank of the river, and to reach it from Victoria we passed again between Leticia and Ramon Castilla. As the *commandantes*, *commissaires*, *prefectos*, *sub-prefectos*, or their Portuguese equivalents, swarmed aboard I clutched my *Folha de Identificação para Pedido de Visto em*



THE SHELL GAME: THE FLAGSHIP AND THE ADMIRAL



STANDARD TRANSPORTATION



*Passaporte estrangeiro en Brasil* (Port of Entry: Rio de Janeiro) and contemplated the prospect of a return trip to Lima via Amazon, Ucayali and Pichis Trail. But the vested powers either couldn't read or didn't care, and my papers were soon handed back to me duly stamped and beribboned. From Tabatinga, we crossed the river to Esperanza, Port No. 5 on our international tour. This too was Brazilian—the seat of the civil authorities and the customs—and more inspecting and more stamping took from midnight until early morning. By eight o'clock we were under-way again, but not down the Amazon. Instead our course led back past our old friends Leticia and Ramon Castilla and off into the Javary River, which flows into the Amazon from the south and for some thousand miles forms the boundary between Peru and Brazil.

The *Cuyaba*, however, refrained from following it for the full thousand, contenting itself with a three-hour run to a decrepit town on the Brazilian side with a name that rivals "Soupy Sue" in my affections: Remate dos Malles—"The Culmination of Evil." In the heyday of rubber, it was one of the most important collecting and shipping stations in all Amazonia, and its name seems to have been acquired in recognition of the high-jinks which were carried on there by the newly rich rubber-hunters. Today its once-flourishing bars and brothels have given way to ramshackle native huts, but it is still an important enough rubber station for the biggest river-boats to visit it regularly on their downward voyages. The *Cuyaba* took on several dozen great, black balls of crude rubber, which the natives rolled ingeniously over the narrow gangway and which bounced about the lower deck, raising havoc among the firewood, hogs, chickens and third-class passengers. At this point our lady ship's-surgeon displayed her professional status for the only time during the trip, advising the passengers not to go ashore, as Remate dos Malles is notorious as one of the worst malarial spots in the South American tropics.

With its newly acquired rubber balls thumping merrily about below, the *Cuyaba* retraced its course down the narrow, swamp-

lined Javary to the Amazon and put into Esperanza for another call. This time, however, it was for less than an hour, and it was not long before we were again out on the main stream and the ship's whistle was announcing triumphantly that we were at last through with frontiers, customs and enchanted mazes, and on our way.

Life on an Amazon river-boat has one thing in common with life on boats the world over—no one has anything to do. This, of course, excepts myself, who, wherever I am, always manage to be at least three weeks behind in my diary; and my solitary labors, as I tried to catch up with myself, provided the principal entertainment for the other passengers on the *Cuyaba*. Each morning after breakfast I would seat myself at one of the dining tables on the afterdeck, and as soon as my pencil was poised, the crowd would begin to gather. I have made a few inconspicuous appearances on the stage in my life, but I had never before *written* for an audience, and at first it was a bit upsetting to look up from my paper and see a half-dozen faces staring at it with eager interest. The Latin-Americans, however, are probably the most accomplished over-the-shoulder-lookers in the world (Lord knows, they practice enough to be), and when I found that my audience refrained from breathing in my ear, jostling my elbow, and dropping cigarette ashes down my neck, I ceased fretting about them. Indeed, by the end of the trip I rather liked them; they gave me the pleasantly important feeling of being the Old Master at Work, surrounded by his disciples. And, in any case, they could not read what I was writing, and I could not understand the comments they made. So there was no hard feeling.

Aside from these personal appearances shipboard life was routine enough, but there were many respects in which it differed from that on American or European ships. Meals were served at eight (*café*), eleven (*almozo*), three (*lunch*), and six-thirty (*jantar*), *almozo* and *jantar* being the important functions. Table vegetables, strangely enough, are a rarity in the Amazonian kingdom of vegetation, and the menu invariably consisted of

three or four courses of meat, with a meat-soup at the beginning and cheese or fruit at the end. Omnipresent was *farinha*, the staple Brazilian starch-food which is made from the mandioca plant. It is not unlike the Peruvian *yucca*, but instead of being served all of one piece is ground up and used as a sort of sauce on practically every kind of food. We soon became adept at scraping it off our plates and feeding it to the ship's cat. Beans and rice still made their appearance, but at decent intervals, and *guayaba*, the native variety of guava jelly, and *papaya* were the staple fruits, as they had been in Iquitos. As is usually the case in encountering a new menu, we thought the food very good for the first few days; for the next few we thought it only fair, and during the last week we thought it terrible. But the same thing can happen at far better restaurants than the *Cuyaba's*.

The niceties of shipboard etiquette baffled us no little at first. The middle-class Brazilian's tropical wardrobe is ninety percent pajamas, and these articles of clothing are considered not only permissible, but fashionable, for every occasion of the day except evening dinner. When Herman and I, however, made our appearance at table in the morning in our shirt sleeves, we were advised by the steward that he could not serve us unless we wore coats. We returned to our cabin, put on our crumpled pajama tops, and were forthwith received as members of the *élite*. Two other Brazilian customs which needed getting-used-to were using the edge of the tablecloth as a napkin (napkins were provided but no one ever used them) and throwing scraps of unwanted food over the shoulder. This latter practice was not quite as bad as it sounds, for the dining tables were on the afterdeck and most of the missiles would clear the railing and end up in the river. Eventually we got to the point where we thoroughly enjoyed the custom, and, whatever may be said against it, it did save the dishwashers a lot of work.

The ship's bar offered little that was new or exotic. The beer was locally made and both cheaper and better than in Peru. The wines—at least such as we tried—were cheaper and worse. In the non-alcoholic category, coffee was of course the most common

drink, followed closely by *maté* (*yerba maté* officially), the Brazilian equivalent of tea. Englishmen and other regular tea-drinkers whom I met in the tropics grew pale at the very mention of *maté* and swore it ranked as a beverage with arsenic and prussic acid, but I must confess that I personally could not tell the two apart. The national cold-drink of Brazil is known as *guarana*, and it is even more ubiquitous than Coca-Cola in the United States. Made from the berry of a tropical tree, it tastes like a mild sort of cherry "pop"—not very exciting, but a good hot-weather drink either plain or as a mixer. Being on our best behavior, after three weeks of "Old Toms" in Iquitos, we used it principally in the former capacity.

One problem which besets the *Nortamericano* everywhere in the tropics is that of water—to drink and flirt with dysentery, typhoid and cholera, or not to drink and go thirsty? After a few days of parched tongues at the beginning of our overland journey, Herman and I threw in our lot with the microbes, and continued to drink whatever came along during the remainder of the trip. Neither of us ever suffered any ill effects, but we were not very happy about it. On the *Cuyaba*, as on the *Huana Capac* and *Melita*, the *agua impura* for passenger consumption was dipped out of the river in pails, with the result that the liquid in our drinking glasses underwent startling and sinister changes in color from day to day. At *café* it might be yellow, at *almozo* brown, at *jantar* a pale chartreuse—almost in perfect harmony with the current tints of the Amazon around us. Usually, too, there was an ample display of the river's less cumbersome animal life, and on one memorable occasion the beige innards of our table carafe proudly displayed an agitated frog. Against such odds the puny science of the germophobic gringo was impotent. We closed our eyes, held our noses, and gulped.

One of the most pleasant features of life on the *Cuyaba* was sleeping in hammocks. Few of the male passengers used their cabin bunks except on particularly stormy nights, and the aft section of the top-deck after 10 P.M. was a swaying forest of cotton and rope. Whereas below the air was stuffy—sometimes

almost stifling—there was invariably a cooling breeze above, and the nocturnal concerts of Herman and his brother-snorers were dissipated in the wide open spaces of the Amazon. It was the first time since I had been in the tropics that I could look forward to retiring at night with pleasure rather than dread. Hanging next to the rail—the hammock swaying gently, its tassels ruffled in the breeze—the dark water flowing below and the keen stars winking overhead, it was falling asleep as falling asleep should be. Except when— But we shall come to that in due time.

A word of warning: hammock-sleeping is not an innate human accomplishment, like breathing or walking, but an art that must be acquired—sometimes painfully. It is very easy to tie the ropes so that one end—usually the head—crashes to the deck as one is just falling asleep. It is also easy to fall out, and if one is a particularly good faller, not only fall out but overboard. Sleeping lengthwise along the hammock is no good; it results in jack-knifing, with the head and feet high and the backside out of sight in the depths. The proper position is to lie crosswise at a forty-five degree angle, which, through some law of physics known only to hammock-manufacturers, keeps the body in a more or less horizontal position. For persons who habitually sleep on their stomachs I have only one word of advice—don't.

The day after leaving the frontier behind we passed the mouth of the Putumayo, also known as the Iça or Rubber River. For several years before 1911 the jungles along its banks were the greatest single source of the world's rubber supply, and even today they rank as one of the most productive areas in Amazonia. In 1910 the name of Putumayo acquired, in addition to its commercial fame, an unsavory notoriety. Reports became current that European and Brazilian rubber-gatherers were enslaving the native Indians and perpetrating atrocities in an effort to force more productive labor from them; and an international commission headed by Sir Roger Casement (the same Casement who was hanged in England during the World War for high treason) was

appointed to investigate. The commission's investigations substantiated many of the rumors, and active measures were instituted to suppress the ruthless exploitation of the country and its inhabitants by the rubber-traders. Within a year or two, however, the South American rubber-boom had collapsed, and the atrocities, together with the feverish commercial activity which had engendered them, stopped of their own accord. This black page in Amazonian history is only another, though an extreme, example of the labor difficulties which have invariably attended all attempts to establish large-scale trade and industry along the great river.

The *Cuyaba* continued to make its regular stops; for wood, for freight, to take on and discharge passengers. The day after passing the frontier we touched at São Paulo de Oliverça and Tunantins, the next at Fonte Boa, the next at Teffé and Coary. As a rule we found these small Brazilian river towns to be more prepossessing in appearance than their Peruvian counterparts. Their principal buildings were usually constructed of multi-colored tile that reflected the bright sun in garish but attractive brightness; the humbler dwellings, instead of being huddled together, were spread over wide areas of cleared land; and the streets and lanes that connected them, while never paved, at least resembled public thoroughfares rather than elongated pigstys. Perversely enough, we came alongside the bank at practically all the smaller villages, but at the larger places, such as Teffé and Coary, were compelled by the presence of shallows and sandbars to anchor a quarter of a mile or more offshore while our commerce with them was carried on by canoes and small sailboats. As had been the case with the *Melita* along the Ucayali, the arrivals and departures of the *Cuyaba* were events of importance along the river bank. At each port the local notables—plus any non-notables who could wedge themselves into a canoe—came aboard for a *guarana* and an hour of gossip; passengers came and went; and the vegetable, animal and human conglomeration on the lower deck waxed ever larger and more confused. Being on the down-trip the ship had virtually no freight to discharge, but at every port there was

fresh cargo waiting to be taken on. By the fifth day out there was no longer room below for the third-class passengers, and they were extricated from behind their fortifications of *barbasco* and Brazil nuts and moved, bag and baggage, to the top-deck. The cattle, poultry, hogs and turtles, however, had to make the best of things, piled one on top of another—and Heaven help the bottommost.

The section of the river down which we were now progressing—the 800-mile stretch from the frontier to Manáos—was formerly known to geographers and travelers as the Solimoes, to distinguish it from the lower Amazon, below Manáos, and in Brazil today is still often referred to by that name. Amazon or Solimoes, it is quite a stream; its width during this part of its course varies between one-and-a-half and three miles, though there are so many islands that one is seldom allowed a simultaneous view of both banks; and the mass of its waters is enormous. The *Cuyaba* kept most of the time to midstream, to take full advantage of the current and avoid the sandbars and mudbanks near shore, but occasionally she was compelled to veer and maneuver as obstructions in the form of shallows or snagged trees appeared in her path. Navigation was by much the same “smell and feel” method as on the *Huana Capac* and *Melita*. The river was far deeper and freer of obstacles than the Ucayali, but the *Cuyaba* was a far larger boat than the others and, though flat-bottomed, would have had no easy time of it if she ran aground.

We never ceased marveling at the skill with which the river pilots steered their craft—particularly at night—but gradually we learned a little of their system. First, there was the trick of keeping to the inside, or convex, bank when rounding a bend, for it is there that the water is usually deepest. Secondly, there were the shadows. A certain kind of shadow—it rarely could be called even a shadow, but was rather a faint differentiation of light—meant sandbanks; another kind meant mud; still another only a large school of fish beneath the surface. Then there were the sound of the river, the smell of the river, the feel of the ship

beneath the feet, and a dozen other varieties of signs and portents—all thoroughly unscientific, all meaningless to the unschooled landlubber, but all combining with astonishing efficacy to carry the ship safely along its course. In landing for wood or at the riverside towns we would invariably steam by our destination in midstream to a point perhaps a quarter of a mile below it, then describe a wide semicircle and approach the embankment from downstream. This was a precaution against becoming stuck in the shallows near shore; if we grounded coming up against the current the weight of waters would help materially in pushing us off, but if we came in with the current and struck bottom its pressure would have the opposite effect of shoving us farther and deeper into the trap.

In the old days, when Iquitos was a flourishing rubber-town, ocean-going freighters of the Booth Line and other European and American vessels ventured occasionally along the upper stretches of the Amazon during the height of the rainy season. But even with the lucrative cargos, the voyage was a poor gamble, for it was a lucky ship that did not go aground at least once during the round-trip. One English freighter, coming downstream from Iquitos near the end of the rainy season, was caught on a sandbank in the falling water and did not get off until the middle of the next rains—*eight months later*. In the meantime, her cargo rotted, her crew almost starved, and her owners became pretty discouraged with the upper Amazon as a thoroughfare for ocean ships. A few years later the fall of rubber removed all reason for large vessels to visit Iquitos, and during the past twenty-five years few have ventured farther upstream than Manáos. The treacherous channels of the Solimoes have been left as the undisputed province of the *Cuyaba* and her flat-bottomed sisters.

The river widened, its rushing waters increased in volume and power, and the occasional towns along its bank grew larger and more prosperous in appearance. But the banks themselves did not change; they presented the same, unvarying curtain of impene-

trable vegetation that had screened the interior of the jungle from our sight ever since we left the first outpost of Amazonia on the Pichis River, fifteen hundred miles to the southwest. There were few signs of animal life along the main stream; indeed, there could not well have been many, for in most places the rising waters had overflowed the bank, and the outermost trees grew out of the river rather than on dry land. Now and then we would catch a glimpse of an anteater, porcupine or other small animal in a forest clearing, and once we espied three large tapirs rooting about on a sandbank, but of the more exotic denizens of the tropical jungles—jaguars, peccaries, sloths, anacondas and the like—we saw nothing at all until we reached the zoo at Pará. Alligators were also absent. They inhabit the Amazon and its tributaries by the million, and in the dry season can be seen even along the busiest stretches of the river; but when the water rises and inundates the sandbars, which are their favorite resort, they abandon the main stream for shallow bayous and inlets, such as those in which we encountered them during our canoe-trip on the Napo. *Bufoes*, the snorting fresh-water porpoises, do not exist in the lower or middle stretches of the Amazon at all. The only sizable aquatic animal we saw between Iquitos and Pará was the *pirarucu*, largest fresh-water fish in the world, which is highly esteemed as food along the river and which we several times saw being harpooned or landed by native fishermen.

If animals were scarce, Indians were scarcer; indeed, aboriginals living in their primitive state of savagery are almost non-existent along the main stream of the Amazon. Everywhere in Brazil where the white man has penetrated to any extent there has been so much intermarriage that the Indian has almost lost his racial identity, together with his old language and customs. Fully two-thirds of the people we encountered on the trip down-river were half Indian or more, but they spoke Portuguese, wore cheap European clothing, and were most of them at least semi-literate. Tribes of the type of the Chunchos and Campas whom we met in Peru have during the past century retired farther and farther

into the interior of the jungles, and it is estimated that there are today not more than fifty thousand such wild Indians left in Brazil. For the most part they are a weak, disease-ridden breed; it is probable that in another hundred years they will be extinct, and the White Man's Burden will have been carried to its inexorable end in Amazonia.

There was, to be sure, no *turista's* Baedeker for the region through which we were passing, but there was Bates, and that was better. Henry Walter Bates was a British entomologist who for twelve years, from 1848 to 1859, lived and worked in tropical South America, and his book, "The Naturalist on the River Amazons," is still, after eighty years, the most interesting and informative account of the region that has been written. Most of his work was done in the jungles around Pará, but his wanderings took him many times up-river, and from Teffé (in his day it was called Ega) down we were in what might properly be called the Bates Country. His investigations and researches were enormous; they were by no means confined to insect life, which was his particular province, but included geography, geology, botany, zoology, economics and human history as well. Did I wish to know the name of a tree, a vine, a flower? Bates had it. Was I curious about the habits of a strange animal or bird? Bates gave the answers. Whatever the information I desired—whether it concerned sauba ants or poisoned arrows or methods of preparing *farinha*, or the sex-life of the Tapuyo Indians—it materialized like magic from the pages of Bates.

But even more remarkable than the man's vast knowledge and experience was the fact that practically all his observations are as valid and accurate today as when he made them three-quarters of a century ago. Time, in Amazonia, is not time as we know it in the feverish change and onrush of the civilized world, and the things Bates saw and experienced in the 1850's—the river itself, the forests and their wild life, the towns and their inhabitants, even the river-boats on which he traveled—differed scarcely at all from what I was seeing and experiencing in 1937. Rubber-booms have come and gone along the great river; the ships of

many nations have breasted its current, and explorers and traders have penetrated ever farther up its tributaries and into the dark interior of its jungles. But none of these things is the true history of the Amazon. A tree, animal or man is born, feeds, grows, propagates and dies. The process is repeated—once, a hundred-fold, a thousandfold, a billionfold. That is its changeless story; in the time of Orellana, in the time of Bates, now. It will still be many years before civilized man, with his ships, machines and schemes of conquest, will cause more than a ripple on the vast surface of its yellow tide.

Becoming acquainted with our fellow-travelers on the *Cuyaba* was a rather more difficult process than it had been on the *Huana Capac* or *Melita*. We had never rated as silver-tongued orators in Spanish, but in Portuguese we might well have been taken for deaf-mutes. Our joint vocabulary consisted of four words—*almozo*, *jantar*, *guarana* and *farinha*—all thoroughly respectable, and pleasingly impressive when tossed casually into back-home conversation, but of woefully little help in establishing communication with our Brazilian confreres. For the first few days aboard we carried on abortive conversations with our Peruvian-detective roommate in purest pigeon-Castilian, but after he quit ship at Coary (whence he was to extradite a gold-smuggler) we were linguistically marooned. After several futile efforts at addressing our Portuguese lawyer roommate in his own tongue we gave up the struggle, and thereafter replied to any remark he directed at us with either "*guten morgen*" or "*pasta fazool*." Between his marmoset and myself, however, there was much better co-operation. I understood perfectly what he was getting at when he chased scurrying forms across my berth while I was trying to sleep, and he, in turn, seemed to get the general idea when I hurled my pillow at him.

Taken as a whole, the community of the *Cuyaba* was long on religion, but short on sanitation. At no time during the trip were there less than three priests aboard, and whenever time seemed to hang particularly heavy on the passengers' hands one or an-

other of them would relieve the situation by conducting Mass. Most of them were strictly routine services, but one, we learned from Parsons, was a very special Mass indeed. It was held for the express purpose of absolving sinners who had taken the name of the Lord in vain while chasing rats and roaches in their cabins.

Life would have been much pleasanter if our companions had been as interested in immaculate bodies as in immaculate souls, but unfortunately they were not. The condition of the *Cuyaba's* decks would have sent an English or American skipper into a seizure of the D.T.'s; the stains on the dining-table covers looked less like the remnants of spilled food than like ancient geological strata; and the great majority of our shipmates, sweating and scratching through the days and nights, obviously had no best friends to tell them. Worst of all, however, was the spitting. To Shakespeare all the world was a stage, but to the average Brazilian all the world's a cuspidor, and rare indeed was the minute that passed on shipboard without the sound of ominous throaty rumblings followed by a dull plop on the deck. Or, if it was not the deck, it was elsewhere—anywhere. Herman and I were not precisely lily-white exquisites after our seven weeks in the jungle, but we wore our slippers in the shower bath just the same.

One man's dish, to be sure, is another man's poison, and while the Brazilians spat and we squirmed, we took our daily sunbaths and the Brazilians stared at us as if we were escaped lunatics. Living almost perpetually, year in and year out, in the sun's hot glare, they could not comprehend how anyone in his right mind could willfully expose himself to its malignant influence. More than once while toasting in a deck chair I turned suddenly around to see one passenger pointing me out to another and tapping his head significantly.

We had, of course, become increasingly well acquainted with the Parsons and Bouchers as the voyage continued. Indeed, had it not been for the former, it is doubtful if we would at any time have had the faintest idea of where we were, who was who, or what was going on. George Parsons was typical of the better type of Englishman in the tropics. He knew his way about, spoke

the language of the country, and in every way seemed as completely at home as if he were already walking the streets of London, toward which he was headed on vacation. He was invariably courteous to the natives with whom he had dealings, but never patronized them, fraternized with them or sought out their company; and it obviously mattered little to him whether or not he was liked, so long as he was respected. Observing his tact, his store of information and his cool matter-of-factness in any and all situations that arose I acquired a better understanding than I had ever had before of how John Bull's little island had spread itself over the globe—and gotten away with it.

In striking contrast to Parsons, the Frenchman Boucher was unhappy, uninformed and unsure of himself. His Iquitian misadventure, of course, had not left him any great reason for high spirits or *bonhomie*, but the impression persisted that even under the happiest of circumstances he would have been a lonely, alien misfit in this uncouth, un-French world. He spoke neither Spanish nor Portuguese and had obviously made no effort to learn them; his comments on the country through which we passed were usually confined to an eloquent "pfui"; and he showed his contempt for the *Cuyaba* and all it represented by letting his beard grow and appearing in linen that put even the table covers to shame. At first acquaintance, I confess, we took him for a boor and a fool and were subsequently startled to discover that, once his shell was broken, he was an intelligent gentleman and pleasant companion. It was just that he belonged on the *Grandes Boulevares*—not on the upper Amazon.

Between the extremes of the Englishman and the Frenchman, *Nortamericanos* Lord and Ullman worried along as best they could. We were not, I am sure, as impressively masters of all situations as was Parsons, nor were we, I hope, as hopelessly lost and floundering as Boucher. Carrying neither the White Man's Burden nor the White Man's Grouch, we fumbled our way through a world that was strange to us, were the friends of all who smiled at us and the enemies of all who scowled, understood practically nothing that anyone said, and replied politely in the

purest gibberish. We most certainly did not strike awe or veneration into the hearts of the Amazonians, but, on the other hand, we were never—so far as we knew, at least—objects of scorn. In the *dramatis personae* of the *Cuyaba* put us down as the comic relief.

"I wish we knew our way around as well as Parsons," I said one day as we sat out in the isolation of our sunbaths. "We must seem like an awful pair of boobs to these people."

Herman shook his head.

"What the hell?" he replied. "I'm like Popeye the Sailor Man. I yam what I yam, and if the spiks don't like it it's just too bad."

But the spiks did like it. In fact, I think Daniel Boone Rover Merriwell-Quixote could have been president of South America if he had half tried.

Late in the afternoon of our seventh day on the *Cuyaba* I was standing on the bridge watching the endlessly unvarying vistas of yellow water and green forest wall. Suddenly I became aware that something, somehow, had changed. Far ahead of us and to our left a vast, heavy shadow seemed to lie upon the river, but when I looked skyward I saw there were no clouds. Could that darkness mean a mudbank, a shallow, a great school of fish or alligators? I called to the officer on watch and pointed in its direction.

"Sí," he nodded. "Rio Negro."

Swiftly we approached the shadowed area, and as we did so I became aware that what I saw was not shadow at all, but water itself that was black. I could see it sweeping powerfully along in its dark tide, side by side with the yellow-brown stream of the Amazon, but separated from it as if by an invisible wall. Within a few minutes we had crossed the dividing line and were steaming suddenly through what seemed a river of ink. Simultaneously the steersman swung his wheel hard, the *Cuyaba* veered slowly round to portside, and the siren let itself go in one of its most prolonged, full-throated whoops. We were headed up the Rio Negro for Manáos.

It was only twenty-five miles to our destination from the confluence of the Amazon and the Negro, but so great is the volume of the waters at the point where the main stream receives its greatest northern tributary that for a short time we were almost out of sight of land. Gradually the Amazonian yellow faded from sight astern, and we were surrounded as far as the eye could see by the strong sable current that pushed down upon us. The blackness of the Rio Negro is not caused by filth, but by the decomposed vegetation of its upper banks. Its water is safe to bathe in and to drink—indeed, it is even held to possess certain antiseptic qualities. But its appearance is against it. Laboring upstream against its black tides, it seemed to have a heavier, thicker texture than the other Amazonian rivers. One had the sensation of adhesiveness, as if sticky fingers were stroking the *Cuyaba's* hull, restraining its progress. The foam in our wake was dark and sluggish, like molasses.

The city we were approaching gave evidence, long before we sighted it, that it was far different from the sleepy, ramshackle river-towns to which we had become accustomed. Small sailboats and steam-launches scuttled back and forth across our path, and presently the massive outlines of ocean-going freighters loomed up on the horizon. Soon we were among them, strangely awake to the realization that we were at last out of the remote, green wilderness in which we had lived for the past seven weeks and back in the world of men, machines and commerce. To our right was the Booth Line's *Dunstan*, steam up, ready to sail for Pará, the Atlantic and Liverpool. To the left, riding at anchor, was the ten thousand ton *Schleswig*, from Bremen, its winches swinging Brazil nuts into its holds from a clutter of surrounding barges, its swastika fluttering, sternly incongruous, against the lazy tropical sky. And now, between them, up rose Manáos itself, vivid and garish in the setting sun behind the masts and rigging of the ships along its water front. High above everything else loomed the dome of its famous opera house—a mosaic crazy-quilt of every color in the spectrum, with a few others thrown in for good measure. Behind its foreground of black jungle river and

against its background of green jungle palms, it was so out of place as to be almost fantastically ridiculous. But Herman and I eyed it with an appreciation we would not have vouchsafed the Taj Mahal itself. After seven weeks of nature's vast, impersonal and perfect architecture, it was so ostentatiously, self-consciously, foolishly, beautifully human.

The story of Manáos is the story of rubber. During a few short years toward the end of the nineteenth century, when the Amazonian forests were supplying ninety percent of the world's raw *caoutchouc*, it mushroomed from an obscure trading post into a thriving modern city of nearly a hundred thousand population. Down from the up-river jungles flowed an endless stream of the precious black gold, and up to meet it came the traders, speculators, capital, machines and ships of the civilized world. Money sprouted from the earth like the trees themselves; overnight beggars were transformed into tycoons and penniless adventurers into international bankers; and as in boom cities the world over, the result was fantastic exaggeration and excess. Here was *homo sapiens*, triumphant and in the chips, and he damn well was going to let the world know about it. Paved streets, water power and electricity, hotels and shops were not enough. Soon there was the opera house, as imposing and ornate as any on the continent, a skyscraper brewery, spacious boulevards and parks, and a street-car system extensive enough to serve a city of a million people.

In those days, as a matter of fact, an eventual population of a million seemed no idle dream. But it was not to be. When the Amazonian rubber industry declined Manáos declined with it, and in twenty-five years the city has shrunk from its peak population of almost a hundred thousand to about sixty-five thousand. That it did not wholly collapse into abandoned decrepitude was owing to its unique geographical situation. Although a thousand miles from the Atlantic it is easily accessible to even the largest ocean-going ships; and although no longer the rubber center of the world it is still the only community larger than a village in an area of two million square miles and, as such, the natural



THE "CUYABA"



LOADING RAW RUBBER AT REMATE DOS MALLES



clearing-house for the produce of the upper Amazon and its numberless tributaries. The City that Rubber Built no longer waxes fat and fabulous on the milk of the hevea tree, but it is still kept alive by the stream of jungle-wealth—timber, fruits, nuts, hides and the rest—which flows through it en route to the world's markets. At the present time upper Amazonia is probably as commercially stagnant as any area in the world. But Manáos is its only port of entry and exit and, as such, still fulfills a function and has escaped the dustheap of abandoned and forgotten cities.

The *Cuyaba* dallied in Manáos for three days, loading and unloading cargo, and Herman and I had ample opportunity to survey its slightly down-at-heel marvels. All roads led to the opera house, glittering and splendiferous atop its central hill, and thither we repaired as fast as the thermometer's hundred-and-five degrees would permit us. The great building stood in a broad plaza (*praça* in Portuguese) paved with multi-colored mosaic that rivaled the dome itself for the distinction of knocking your eye out. Between brilliant footstool and brilliant summit the walls were a uniform white, but so broken up into colonnades, balconies, porticos, friezes, abutments and plaster confectionery that it seemed the architects had gone to the jungle itself rather than to the Dorians, Corinthians and Byzantines for their model. Although a quarter of a century ago the house often played host to the most famous European singers and musicians, it has now been many years since it has been used for anything other than occasional political meetings or local festivals, and at the time of our visit it was closed and dark. Snooping about, however, we found an unlocked side door and for a moment stepped inside into the cool gloom of the interior. The auditorium was enormous, and in the darkness we could faintly see the shrouded seats sloping away row on row and tier on tier. How many passes, I brooded morbidly, would the house manager have to hand out to fill up those cavernous recesses on a rainy Monday night?

The rest of the town we saw mainly through the good offices

of the street-car company. The trams of Manáos lacked the exotic appeal of Iquitos' furious Donald Duck, but they were the swiftest and best operated I have ever ridden in anywhere, and they penetrated practically every nook and alley of the town. In addition, several of the lines wandered well beyond the limits of human habitation into virgin jungle (they had been laid in the optimistic days when that million population was just around the corner) and in the course of a complete circuit we were presented with an out-the-window panorama ranging from traffic jams on the Avenida Joachim Nabuco to monkeys hurling coconuts from the top of forest palms. So tightly does the jungle press against the outskirts of Manáos that constant vigilance is necessary to keep it from overrunning the streets and squares, and two miles from the center of town, in every direction save riverwards, is a tight ring of wild, untouched vegetation. It is penetrated only by the more adventuresome branches of the trolley line at a few scattered points and by a single dirt road leading out for some twenty-five miles to the waterfalls near a small lake called Taruma, where a resort of sorts has been established. Beyond Taruma there is no overland egress from Manáos; a thousand miles of forest separate it in every direction from the nearest road or railway.

In the pleasant sidewalk cafés on the main *avenidas*, however, the jungle seemed remote. Here electric fans, ice, laundered clothing and pretty women were no longer the visions of a fevered imagination, but vivid realities; small boys shouted the attractions of newspapers and shoe-shines; trucks, taxicabs and the innumerable trams rumbled past; and in the cool of the evening crowds thronged the streets on their way to movie-shows, prize fights and similar super-civilized diversions. In the main square there was even a drugstore with modernistic fixtures and a large sign over the entrance bearing the incredible legend: SODA.

"Hot damn!" quoth Herman, as he poured the second quart of what purported to be chocolate ice cream down his gullet.

"If it wasn't for the scorpion under the table I'd think I was back in Liggett's."

Manáos was pleasing to the eye, as well as to the stomach. The opera house, of course, was the show place, and the huge, brick brewery the runner-up attraction; but most of the principal squares and thoroughfares were attractively—if less sensationally—impressive. Almost all the better buildings were built of tile, predominantly white, but with colorful embellishments and red roofs, and the wide *avenidas* which they fronted were lined with richly green, spreading mango trees. In view of its economic plight since the decline of rubber the city could hardly be said to be prosperous, but there was at least a certain illusion of prosperity and, for a community located less than five degrees from the equator, astonishing activity. Occasional passers-by on the streets actually looked as if they were going some place.

In Peruvian Iquitos most of the inhabitants had been so similar in appearance as to be almost indistinguishable one from another. In Brazilian Manáos they were as heterogeneous as the passengers in a New York subway car. One out of about every five appeared to be pure white, another one pure black, the rest an obscure mixture of both, usually with a liberal dash of red Indian thrown in. The extremes of wealth and poverty were great, but the distinction between "civilized" and "uncivilized" which we encountered along the upper Amazon and its tributaries was gone. Even the lowest-class Indians and *Cafuzos* spoke Portuguese and wore modern, machine-made clothing.

There was, we soon found, a rather large gringo colony in Manáos, most of them either representatives of the Booth Line or employees of the street-car company, electric light company and port works, all of which were either British or American operated. This was Parsons' home grounds (he had been first in command of the Booth office for over eight years) and through him we met several of his compatriots and imbibed many excellent whisky-and. It is a well-tried truism that two or more Englishmen, set down anywhere on the surface of the earth, will form a club, and those in Manáos had punctiliously observed the

tradition. Indeed, there was not merely one club, but two; the Athletic Club, near the center of town, where the available exercise was principally of the elbow-bending variety, and the somewhat euphemistically named Country Club, some three blocks farther out, which boasted a miniature botanical garden and a natural, open-air swimming pool. The pool was fed from the Rio Negro, and, although filtered, its water was as jet black as that of the river itself. It took a bit of priming before we were up to the initial plunge, but once in we found it coolly refreshing and without taste or odor. Only once while in its murky embrace did an untoward event occur. While treading water I suddenly looked downward and saw two dim, faintly yellowish horrors wriggling toward me from the inky depths. I yelled—good and loud—but before Herman or Parsons could reach me order had been restored. I had discovered they were only my feet.

By far the most interesting and colorful part of Manáos is its port. Its docks, built as floats so as to be unaffected by the periodic rise and fall of the river, accommodated the large cargo ships of many nations; in a sheltered bay near by was the landing-place of the weekly Pan-American planes from Pará; and swarming everywhere, from sunrise to sunset, were the hundreds of small craft of the native fishermen and traders. Steam and the internal combustion engine still come under the heading of luxuries in Amazonia, and only a few of Manáos' merchant marine were thus equipped. But scarcity breeds ingenuity, and each morning we were in port we saw the few power launches there were set off about their business with a dozen or more motorless craft dragging along behind. In the evening they returned in the same fashion. The procedure was for the launches to shuttle back and forth all day between Manáos and the principal near-by fishing grounds and trading stations. They offered towing service for a small charge, and the boats they towed cut themselves loose when they reached their destination and later in the day, when their business was done, were picked up again by the caravan.

Shortly before the *Cuyaba* sailed an interesting newcomer pulled into port: a small launch flying the Venezuelan flag that had come to Manáos not by way of the Amazon, but through the Casiquiare Canal and down the Rio Negro. This natural canal—the only one of its kind in the world—connects one of the tributaries of the Negro with the upper Orinoco in southernmost Venezuela, thus providing a continuous inland waterway from the Caribbean Sea to Manáos and the heart of Amazonia. More than two hundred miles in length, it is broad and deep enough during the rainy season to accommodate ships of considerable draft, but the region it serves is so remote and commercially undeveloped that only a handful of boats traverse it in the course of a year. Indeed, this northern part of South America's interior is so little known that only a few geographers and the more traveled native river-men are aware of the Casiquiare's location, or even its existence.

The *Cuyaba's* course, I regret to report, did not carry us toward the mysterious Casiquiare, but back down the Negro to Old Mother Amazon, who by this time was as familiar an acquaintance as the Hudson or the Harlem. As we nosed away from the dock in the late afternoon the welkin shuddered with the anguish of tooted farewells, particularly between the *Cuyaba* and her sister-ship, the *Districto Federal*, which had arrived a few hours before on her up-trip to Iquitos. Soon, however, the accustomed silence of the river had descended upon us, broken only by the faint, dull swish of the black waters against the ship's side. Swiftly, for we were now proceeding downstream, the tall ships and red roofs of Manáos receded in our wake, until all that was left was the distant glittering dome of the Opera House that Rubber Built. Then that too was gone, and there was only the river and the jungle and a red sun cushioned on the tree tops.

During our three days in Manáos the long-deferred rainy season of Amazonia had at last given indications that it might be catching up with us. It had rained in short, sudden spells early each morning and again late each afternoon, and in between we

had noticed an unaccustomed heaviness and humidity in the air. But there had been nothing even vaguely resembling the equatorial torrents of which we had been warned. As we nosed out of the Rio Negro and back into the Amazon that night the sky was rich velvet above us and the stars were burnished gold.

"Hell's bells," I remarked to Herman as we double-jointed ourselves into our top-deck hammocks. "If they call this the rainy season they should visit Atlantic City on a Labor Day week-end."

"Yeah," he replied sleepily. "I was just wondering what it'd be like in the dry season. We'd probably have to *walk* down the river to Pará."

Soon a deeper, more majestic note mingled with the steady thrumming of the *Cuyaba's* engine, and I knew he was asleep. I closed my eyes and swung toward darkness on the gentle rocking of the warm east wind.

I have never been shot from the mouth of a cannon, but I can tell you exactly what it's like. As I recall the event, I began awakening while hurtling through the air at approximately the muzzle-velocity of a Big Bertha shell and completed the process as a crumpled mass against the *Cuyaba's* iron rail. The first thing I discovered was that I had not been alone in my flight. My hammock had followed me—or I had followed it—and it was now busily engaged in strangling me in wet folds as I lay half-stunned and panting on the deck. Laboriously I extricated myself from its clutches, shook my head to clear it, and looked around.

The scene on the *Cuyaba's* top-deck was straight out of Dante's "Inferno," except that water instead of fire was being used for the chastisement of the damned. To say simply that it was raining and that the wind was blowing would be like saying of the Atlantic Ocean that it is rather wet. What seemed like a solid wall of water was pouring across the railings from the night beyond, propelled by a force it was impossible to believe mere air could muster. The wind howled and whooped and raved like an army of lunatics; the sound of the rain as it struck the surface

of the river below was like the crackle of machine-gun fire. Directly in front of me an empty hammock (it had just deposited its owner beside me on the deck) was straining, rigid and horizontal, against the blast. Even above the howling of the elements I could hear its fibers stretching, cracking; then suddenly it gave, with a report like a gun, and in a twinkling had vanished into the night. The whole length and breadth of the deck the same carnage was under way. Hammocks, ropes, baggage, lifebelts, clothing—everything and anything that was not structurally part of the ship, was whirling through the air, flapping crazily from poles and stanchions, or simply disappearing overboard. Here and there among them, crouched over against the wind and rain, passengers ducked and darted in desperate but futile efforts at salvage. Rashly I stood up without holding on to anything, only to be smacked down again as if by the blow of a gigantic fist. On the second try I at least got somewhere; a screeching blast of wind and water wrenched the railing from my hand and deposited me against the upright from which my hammock had been hanging. There was no hammock there any longer—only the tattered remnant of its supporting rope where it had broken cleanly in two. As I hugged the upright for support something wet and heavy zoomed out of the night and wrapped itself about my head. Pulling it off I discovered it was a pink-striped pajama top. By this time I should not have been surprised if its owner had suddenly come sailing through the air after it.

At this point I discovered I was in imminent danger of losing my own pajamas. The wind had somehow got under them, and though sopping wet they bulged out away from me, straining at the buttons. Clutching them to me I tore for the companionway, only to find that some dozen other passengers had had the same bright idea at the same time. We arrived simultaneously—not, however, in the shelter of the companionway, but flat on the deck, and the tangled mass of us promptly slid back to the railing in the best Coney Island-Steeplechase style. The lone night-light of the *Cuyaba's* top-deck had long since gone out,

and we struggled to extricate ourselves one from another in howling, waterlogged darkness. Removing one fellow-wrestler's hair from my mouth and another's foot from my pajama pocket, I finally regained my feet; then seeing a momentarily clear path to the companionway, I rushed for it again. The deck sloped away from me as I ran, ankle-deep in rushing water, and when I was five yards from my goal the wind caught up with me and knocked me flat again. But this time I made it. Not on my feet, to be sure—but I made it. In his palmiest days Ty Cobb never stole second base in finer style.

Herman had reached the cabin before me and was dripping ruefully in the middle of the floor.

"Guess maybe that rainy season's arrived," he said.

When we ventured on deck the next morning the elements had resumed their mask of guileless innocence. The sun was warm, but friendlily disposed; only the tiniest shreds of white cloud drifted across the bottomless blue of the sky; and the east wind purred through the rigging as if its sole concern in the world was the well-being of the *Cuyaba* and its passengers. To the south, we suddenly noticed, the shore had again disappeared. We were passing the mouth of the Madeira River, and our eyes, encompassing half the horizon, encountered an endless waste of heaving yellow water, and nothing more.

The Madeira is the greatest of all the Amazon's tributaries, and the volume of its current rivals that of the mother-stream itself. Flowing into it from the southwest it drains an enormous area in western Brazil and eastern Bolivia. One group of its remoter affluents rises in the Peruvian Andes, only a few miles from the headwaters of the Ucayali; another group, far to the south, almost touches the northernmost streams of the great Plate system of the Argentine. There has been occasional talk in the past of connecting these Madeira and Plate tributaries by a canal, and although the terrain, in the heart of Bolivia's Gran Chaco, offers almost insurmountable difficulties it is an idea with thrilling possibilities. With such a canal in operation it would

be possible for a small ship to make an inland voyage of almost four thousand miles through the heart of the South American continent; into the Orinoco from the Caribbean, up the Orinoco to the Casiquiare Canal, down the Rio Negro to the Amazon, up the Madeira and its tributaries to the headwaters of the Plate system, and finally down its rivers to their terminus in the Atlantic Ocean at Buenos Aires.

But if the Madeira offers immense possibilities for the future, it has, in the past, been a river of frustration, heartbreak and death. Some seven hundred miles above its confluence with the Amazon its course is broken by a series of rapids and falls, effectively blocking commerce between the lower river and its great tributaries to the south. For years this barricade of nature was a nightmare to Bolivia. Shut off from the Pacific by the highest ranges of the Andes, its natural commercial outlet would have been the Madeira and Amazon, had it not been for the former's two-hundred-mile stretch of rocks and shallows. In the first decade of the twentieth century the nation's problem became particularly acute. The great Amazonian rubber-boom was at its height, and along the Mamoré, Beni and Guaporé rivers and the other Bolivian tributaries of the Madeira grew countless thousands of trees bearing the precious latex for which the world was clamoring. But there was no way to get it out. As far back as 1878 the government had sought the aid of American engineering skill, and an attempt had been made to build a railroad along the obstructed stretch of the river, connecting the lowermost navigable point of the Mamoré with the uppermost navigable point of the Madeira. But two years later the job had been abandoned, with millions of dollars spent, tracks laid for exactly two miles of the necessary two hundred, and one-third of the men engaged in the project dead.

After this disaster more than thirty years passed before the world's demand for rubber became so pressing that another attempt was made. In 1909 an English engineering company undertook the job, and during the next three years, in the face of almost incredible difficulties and hardships, carried it through to

its successful conclusion. It was of the building of the Madeira-Mamoré Railroad that H. M. Tomlinson wrote in "The Sea and the Jungle," and if ever there was a story of man's struggle against nature worthy of recording in the pages of a great book surely this was it. All materials, machinery, fuel and supplies had to be brought from England (Tomlinson himself came on a ship bearing coal). The jungles which had to be penetrated were among the densest and wildest in all Amazonia—a sweating, matted wilderness of rank vegetation, ferocious beasts, disease-bearing insects and hostile savages. The men, both gringos and natives, died like flies—from the still unconquered Yellow Jack, from malaria, dysentery and typhoid fever, or, if they escaped the ravages of the microbes, from heat prostration, ill-nourishment, snakebite or poisoned arrows. But in spite of everything the work progressed and by 1912 it was completed: two hundred miles of shining steel, from San Antonio in Brazil to Porto Bello in Bolivia, through the most savagely impenetrable terrain that the surface of the earth has to offer.

The greatness of the story of the Madeira-Mamoré lies in its building; its tragedy and irony in what followed. The very year of its completion was the year in which plantation rubber was first successfully exported from the East Indies, and in an unbelievably short time the industry in South America was dead. The countless thousands of wild rubber trees still stood in the Bolivian jungles, but nobody wanted them. The Madeira-Mamoré Railroad, one of the greatest engineering feats ever accomplished, stood ready to transport their latex toward its market, but nobody had any use for it. For the past twenty-five years an average of one train a month has passed along the tracks which it took such superhuman effort and so many lives to lay. Wild rubber is still dead, and the new trans-Andean railways provide quicker egress for Bolivia's mineral and agricultural exports than would the Madeira and the Amazon. In terms of present-day commerce the obscure jungle railroad is as dead as the thousands of men who gave their lives to build it.

Soon after passing the mouth of the Madeira we put in at the town of Itacoatiara, or, more pronounceably, Serpa. While the *Cuyaba* gorged its lower deck on rubber and Brazil nuts, we plopped through the sodden streets (the deluge of the night before had obviously handled Serpa as roughly as it had us) and presently arrived at what seemed to be the community's major enterprise—the slaughterhouse. It was situated directly on the river bank and was easily identifiable from afar by the hosts of vultures which circled watchfully above it or perched, waiting, on the surrounding trees. Serpa's abattoir, however, attracted far more sinister visitors than these. Remnants of the butchered animals were thrown into the water, and lying in wait for them were schools of *piranha*, the most dreaded of all the Amazon's galaxy of weird and terrible inhabitants.

Many tales—some tall, some true—have been told of the *piranhas*, but even without the embellishments of travelers' imaginations they are among the most formidable and dangerous creatures that nature has devised. Small fish, seldom more than a foot in length, they are possessed of almost incredible strength and speed, and, added to these, a strange sensitivity to human or animal blood. Traveling always in schools they will rarely, if ever, molest man or beast if his skin is whole and free from cuts or bruises; but woe betide the swimmer who has so much as an open scratch upon his body. For once they catch the scent of blood, in however small quantity, the *piranhas* are transformed into demons of unimaginable ferocity. Their jaws have the strength of iron and the tearing power of a buzz saw, and when they gang up upon a victim they do not merely wound or mutilate, but literally devour him. There was no living prey available for the *piranhas* around Serpa's slaughterhouse, but what they did to the scraps of meat that came their way was ample proof of their habits. As we watched, one of the butchers rolled the head of a slaughtered ox down the mud embankment into the river. Instantly the sluggish stream became a boiling frenzy of flashing fins and snapping jaws; we could hear the ripping and tearing of flesh, and the surface of the water quickly darkened from yellow-

brown to red. Within two minutes the commotion was over, and the river flowed on quietly as before. Presently, though, something washed up out of it onto the shore near where we stood. It was the skull of the ox, as white and bare as if it had been buried in the earth for a hundred years.

Although the day was hot and the *Cuyaba* seemed in no hurry to leave Serpa, we successfully resisted any urge to plunge in the Amazon. We replaced our vanished hammocks at the town's lone general store, slung them on what was left of the top-deck, and prepared to make up for our interrupted sleep of the previous night. There is, however, apparently something about a hammock that enrages the Amazonian heavens, for no sooner were we comfortably installed than the sun sickened and died, ferocious black clouds swarmed up over the horizon, and the deluge resumed where it had left off some twelve hours before. This time we escaped to the shelter of the lower deck with both hammocks and anatomies intact.

Neither our attorney-roommate nor our marmoset-roommate was in the cabin when we reached it, but another fellow-passenger was: a small boy of some seven or eight years whom I recognized as belonging to an Indian family that was traveling third class. Herman, who was fonder of children than anything except talking and snoring, had struck up quite an acquaintance with him during the past few days—teaching him games and feeding him indigestibles from the ship's commissary—and we were therefore not particularly surprised to find him in our quarters.

"*Pasta fazool*," said Herman by way of greeting.

The only response was a shy smile, and as the little fellow apparently wanted nothing except to sit there we let him sit, while we piled into our bunks and fell asleep. He was still there when we awoke. He was still there when we went out to *jantar*. And he was still there when we returned—and not only there, but undressed and asleep in Herman's bunk. The time for constructive action having obviously arrived, we awakened him, but

all efforts to ease him out of the cabin resulted in stiff resistance and, finally, tears.

"I'll get his folks," said Herman, and disappeared down the deck.

Five minutes later he returned, minus folks, but with a baffled expression.

"All they did was to keep pointing at me," he explained. "Maybe we'd better get Parsons."

With the omniscient Britisher in tow we sought out the boy's parents. Herman and I stood by while he weathered a violent barrage of Portuguese. When finally he turned to us his usual imperturbability seemed somehow a little askew.

"She says he's yours," he explained, pointing at Herman.

Daniel Boone Rover Merriwell-Quixote's Adam's apple performed a double somersault.

"Mine?" he gulped feebly.

"*Sí, sí, sí, sí, sí, senhor,*" declared the mother. "*A usted, senhor. A usted.*"

For the first time since I had known him words failed the Man from Muscatine—but not the mother. She was rattling away again to Parsons.

"She says," he finally explained, "that she has fourteen children and you haven't any. She doesn't want the boy, but she thinks you do; so she's making you a present of him."

It took Herman some five minutes to catch his breath and another twenty to explain to the woman, via Parsons, that he would have to decline the offer. At last she accompanied us reluctantly to the cabin, collected the child's few belongings and took him away with her. He cried as he left.

The next morning, at Parintins, the family left the *Cuyaba*. We watched them crossing the gangplank to the shore, the boy's pockets bulging with chocolates and nuts that Herman had given him, his back bent under a seventy-five pound sack of *farinha*. Halfway down he turned to smile good-by, but his father forestalled him with a kick that sent him sprawling in the river-bank mud.

"The son of a —," muttered Herman. Then he turned away. In Amazonia, after all, one cannot expect a mere human child to receive the treatment that is accorded, say, a fine, fattened hog or a new pair of shoes. Children come cheaper.

During our passage of the lower Amazon the rainy season settled down to work in earnest, and from Manáos to Pará not a day passed on which the heavens did not at some time open up and dump their contents in our lap. Once underway, however, the rains observed a punctilious schedule which enabled us to prepare for them in advance and eliminated the possibility of a recurrence of our Night of Havoc. Promptly at two o'clock each morning and at four each afternoon the clouds gathered, the wind came up, and the deluge was on; and each time the storm continued for an hour, almost to the minute, and then blew away. This timetable, of course, made it impossible for us to spend the nights in our top-deck hammocks, but we finally effected an amicable compromise with the elements. We retired into the hammocks about eleven, set Herman's alarm clock for one-thirty, and when it gave warning betook ourselves to the shelter of our cabin, leaving the deck to its imminent watery fate. By that time we were sleepy enough not to be bothered by such minor matters as rats gnawing at our toes.

Below Parintins the river widened appreciably, and frequently long vistas opened out ahead in which no land was visible. We began to encounter islands—long, low bars of mud and sand built up by the enormous mass of silt which the water carried with it. As often as not, however, what we first took for islands were not islands at all, but great floating conglomerations of earth, trees and grass which the river had torn from its banks and was carrying oceanward. The surface of the stream, though still the same yellow-brown, had acquired a new power and turbidness from the weight of the recent rains and the influx of the great tributaries. Along the banks palms and vines growing directly out of the water gave evidence of how far the river had risen.

On the morning of the third day from Manáos we put in at

Obidos, one of the largest towns on the lower Amazon. It is situated at a point where the river suddenly narrows to a width of less than a mile and passes between high walls of gray-white rock. In the unfamiliar constraint of this channel the current more than doubles its usual three-mile-an-hour velocity, and the *Cuyaba's* engine strained into reverse as we neared our landing place. In a moment we noticed a strange thing: for the first time on our journey the ship was not circling about to effect a landing facing upstream, but was heading directly in toward the shore with the current. Or was it with the current? Suddenly, peering over the side, I saw that the river had seemingly reversed itself and that though we were still facing downstream the water was pushing strongly up against us. The engine was no longer in reverse, but driving us forward with all its power. Under our bows a canoe appeared, drifting rapidly *upstream*. Parsons showed up in time to assure me that I was not suffering from hallucinations, but was witnessing the peculiar Amazonian phenomenon of the *remanse*. At certain points along the river, he explained—particularly at such places as the narrows of Obidos, where the main current is greatly compressed and intensified—a counter-current is frequently developed along one or both banks which flows upstream for a distance of a few miles while the main body of the river continues its usual course. The *remanse* is hurled back from the fringes of the central current in much the same way as if it were by the force of an onrushing speedboat.

Atop its steep escarpment Obidos was a town of considerable attractiveness but no apparent reason for existence. Owing to the swiftness of the main current and the trickiness of the *remanse* scarcely any of the big, Manáos-bound freighters stop there, and even the *Cuyaba*, which constitutionally preferred loitering to moving, made short shrift of it. Whatever interest the town may have for the casual traveler lies less in its present than in its past. At the conclusion of the Civil War in the United States a small group of Confederate die-hards, unwilling to submit to Yankee domination, emigrated to Brazil and eventually settled

along the Amazon, near Obidos. They fared considerably better than the average white colonists in tropical South America, but as new generations came along, to whom slaveholding and the Civil War were no longer vital issues, most of the families began to drift back to the States. The few who remained have by this time, through intermarriage and the adoption of Brazilian ways, become indistinguishable from their Latin and Indian neighbors.

From Obidos it was about an eight-hour run to Santarem, at the mouth of the Tapajos River. Within fifteen minutes both *remanse* and cliffs disappeared, the river widened, and all was again the same as it had been for two thousand miles: trees, ferns, vines; trees, ferns, vines; and between them, endlessly, the great yellow-brown flow of the Amazon. At four it rained. At five it stopped. And at nine the clustered lights of Santarem slipped toward us out of the darkness across our starboard bow. No sooner had we cast anchor than the waters around us were alive with moving lights, as every boat, raft and other floating object in the harbor scurried out to meet us. Before the engines had stopped there was an almost solid bridge of small craft between us and the shore, and what seemed to be 9999 of Santarem's ten thousand inhabitants were milling about the *Cuyaba's* deck. After several weeks of Amazon river ports we were accustomed to welcoming committees, but this one, unlike all the others, was not socially but on business bent. In a twinkling merchandise was everywhere on display—mostly painted gourds and multi-colored basketwork, for which Santarem has long been noted—and the quiet night air was shattered by the shouting of the vendors.

"*Senhor, compra isto—*" raucously.

"*Senhor, uma canastra—*" cajolingly.

"*Meestair, observa isto—*" importunately.

"*Meestair—*" thunderingly.

It was with a sharp, sudden pang that I realized we were back in the world of high-pressure salesmanship. Lord and Ullman, adventurers-par-excellence, were no more. Suddenly they had

THE OPERA  
HOUSE THAT  
RUBBER BUILT,  
MANÁOS



ITACOATIARA (SERPA IS EASIER)



been transformed into those worthy but dull fellows: Lord and Ullman—*turista*. Oh, well—

“*Quanto?*” I heard myself inquiring in the old familiar tone.

Like the other Amazon towns between Manáos and Pará Santarem's commerce is negligible, but, unlike them, its hopes are great. One hundred and fifty miles up the Tapajos River, near the inconsequential village of Bella Vista, work is in progress on the only large-scale rubber plantation in the Western Hemisphere. The name of the plantation is Fordlandia, named for the proprietor, Henry Ford.

To understand the nature of this venture in the Brazilian jungles and its enormous importance to all Amazonia it is necessary to be acquainted, at least in rough outline, with the history of rubber and its exploitation. The best rubber in the world is derived from a tree known to botanists as *hevea brasiliensis*, which is indigenous only to tropical South America. Throughout the nineteenth century this tree was jealously guarded by the Brazilian government, which realized its growing commercial importance, but in 1876 a small group of Englishmen collected and smuggled out of the country a large cargo of *hevea* seeds, and the result was its transplantation, for the first time in history, into foreign soil. For years thereafter English and Dutch scientists studied the seed and the difficult problems of its culture, and early in this century, as the fruit of their labors, the first rubber plantations were laid out in the Malay Peninsula, Ceylon, Java and other East Indian islands. During all these years of research and experiment Brazil knew little and cared less about what she was soon to know, to her sorrow, as the great “seed snatch.” The world's demand for rubber increased by leaps and bounds; black gold poured down the Amazon and its tributaries in an unending stream; and Brazil was undisputed mistress of this new and lucrative commercial kingdom. In 1910 the total world output of all kinds of rubber was ninety-four thousand tons, and Amazonia supplied more than half. Small wonder that the lights

burned brightly and the coin clinked merrily in the counting houses of Iquitos, Manáos and Pará.

But the annals of this jungle Never-Never-Land of glory, gold and opera houses were destined to be as brief as they were spectacular. In 1911 the first large cargos of East Indian rubber were dumped on the world market, and in an astonishingly short time the center of *caoutchouc* production had shifted from the valley of the Amazon to the other side of the world. Brazilian rubber had always grown wild—neither capital nor labor was ever available in sufficient quantities for the establishment of plantations—and though its quality was the highest its supply was uncertain and its exploitation haphazard in the extreme. In competition with the new eastern rubber, grown scientifically on plantations and marketed by highly organized business methods, it did not stand the ghost of a chance. Year after year the Amazonian output declined, until in 1934, when the world hit its all-time rubber-producing peak of 1,019,000 tons, Brazil contributed less than one percent of the total. The twentieth century world of organized industry and high-speed mass production had caught up with it and passed it by.

Amazonia would probably have been permanently abandoned to its economic fate if it had not been for an anomalous situation which soon developed in the new rubber empire. Although England and the Netherlands controlled production, the United States was far and away the largest manufacturer and consumer, and its industrial tycoons began to feel the need of providing their own raw material. In the early 1920's Harvey Firestone began large-scale plantation operations in Liberia and a few years later followed up by financing a United States government survey of large sections of the Amazon Valley. He never acted on the findings of the survey, but his close friend and associate, Henry Ford, did. Never a rubber manufacturer, but by all odds the greatest rubber consumer in the world, Ford had long believed in producing as many of his own raw materials as he could, and the great Brazilian forests seemed to him to be the answer to one of his major needs. In 1927 he obtained a conces-

sion of three million acres of jungle land on the banks of the remote Tapajos, and the great experiment of Fordlandia began.

To date the experiment has been of the "noble" rather than of the successful variety. Of the three million acres in the concession less than twelve thousand have been planted, and up to the beginning of 1937 not a single pound of rubber had been taken out. Though on a vastly greater scale and backed by vastly greater resources than any previous enterprises in Amazonia, Fordlandia, in the ten years since its establishment, has encountered the same difficulties as its predecessors. Floods, heat, disease, hostile natives, lack of transportation facilities; all of these have plagued and retarded the project; but greatest of all obstacles, as always, has been the shortage of labor—even though workers are offered wages hitherto unheard of in that part of the world. There have been many rumors in the past few years that Ford has soured on his Brazilian white elephant and would soon abandon it; but so far, in spite of oceans of red ink, he has stuck by his guns. And in his sticking Amazonia sees its hope for the future. Although its commercial importance at the present time is nil, Fordlandia is still the one and only venture in the production of plantation rubber to be found in the Western Hemisphere, and on its ultimate success or failure depends the commercial fate of half a continent. It will be a red-letter day for the great river and its people when the first cargo of raw rubber sets out from Boa Vista on the Tapajos on its journey to the land of the V8's.

Below Santarem the Amazon assumed proportions that made it seem less a river than a great inland sea. On the second morning out distant, table-topped mountains appeared far to the north—so low and inconspicuous that they would have passed almost unnoticed under ordinary circumstances, but seeming positively spectacular after almost three thousand miles in which the horizon had never once risen above the tree tops of the green forest ocean. At a tumble-down mudbank village called Monte Allegre the *Cuyaba* took on, in addition to its ration of *lenya*, two German zoologists, complete with butterflies, parrots, armadillos,

guns and whiskers. They spoke no English, and our conversations with them were limited to strangled mutterings; but they—or rather their collection of animals—nevertheless filled an important gap in our South American education. It would hardly have done for Herman and me to return to the salons of Manhattan and Muscatine and be forced to confess that, in crossing three thousand miles of the world's wildest jungle, we had seen a grand total of one snake, two sloths and a dozen alligators. Now, however, we were safe, and by the time we reached Pará were able to talk as glibly of *guaribas*, *mucuras*, *agoutis* and *sucurujus* as if we had personally wrestled all of them into submission. Even photographs could be taken, if one were careful, in which the bars of the cages did not show.

The night after leaving Monte Alegre we could have sworn that the *Cuyaba* had somehow slipped past Pará and was out in the open Atlantic. The last vestiges of land had disappeared, and we steamed along in the center of an unbroken ring of sky and water. It was, therefore, with something like astonishment that we awoke the following morning to find ourselves threading a narrow channel of a few hundred yards' width, along which the river-bank foliage almost scraped our decks as we passed. This was no longer the great lower Amazon to which we had become accustomed, but the Amazon we had known on the other side of the continent, when it bore the names of Pichis, Pachitea and Poucartambo. About two hundred and fifty miles from the Atlantic the main river sweeps sharply to the north, emptying into the sea directly on the equator. All its waters, however, do not follow this current, and for hundreds of miles south of it the jungles are broken by a network of small streams and channels as its excess forces its way through them to the sea. Pará itself lies some hundred and fifty miles from the mouth of the main river, and we were therefore taking the shortest route toward it through a tortuous labyrinth of narrow streams.

Throughout a whole day we progressed along the shores of the island of Marajó, a body of land larger than the state of Rhode Island, which lies in the mouth of the Amazon and

separates the main current from the smaller streams which emerge at Pará. For perhaps six hours we threaded our way through the narrows; then gradually the banks began again to recede, and by nightfall the land to the south had entirely disappeared. We were passing the mouth of the Tocantins River, the great waterway of eastern Brazil which flows from the south and meets the Amazon system less than two hundred miles from the sea. From this point on we were, strictly speaking, not on the Amazon at all, but on the estuary of the Tocantins, which is called the Pará River. But nobody on the *Cuyaba*—least of all ourselves—was willing to admit it. For two months and thirty-five hundred miles we had traversed a continent on the waters of the great Amazon, anticipating as if it were the millennium the great day on which it would at last reach journey's end in the Atlantic; and we were not going to let it be cheated of its royal prerogatives by any upstart Pará or Tocantins. True, we were emerging by the side door rather than the majestic main entrance two hundred miles to the north; but we were still on the same continuous waterway, and at least part of the great yellow-brown stream beneath our keel had come from almost within sight of the Pacific in the Andes of Peru.

Even the *Cuyaba's* phlegmatic Roman senator of a captain seconded our sentiments.

"*Amazonas*," he declared stoutly. "*Realmente Amazonas*."

No man can sail the River Amazon and not be proud of it.

We were to reach Pará in the early morning—the sixth since leaving Manáos, the fifteenth since leaving Iquitos. For the last time Herman and I swung indolently in our hammocks on the top-deck, watching the stars and the distant, palm-fringed shores. At one and the same time we were happy and unhappy—glad at the prospect of journey's end, sorry as one is always sorry when a good chapter is about to be concluded, a good book closed. I have said that no man can sail the Amazon and not be proud of it; but I can go farther than that. No man can live, for however short a time, within the three million square miles which

its great arms encompass and not have his thoughts and feelings—even his very life—profoundly influenced by it. For the Amazon is more than the greatest river in the world, more than a mere geological phenomenon performing its age-old, ageless functions according to the laws of time, gravity and erosion. It is the blood stream of a continent. It, and it alone, gives accessibility, energy, pattern and meaning to the vast wilderness which it traverses. It alone makes life possible in the trackless world of interior South America between Venezuela and the Argentine, the Andes and the Atlantic. The Mississippi rolls majestically on its way, but swift trains roar beside and across it, and it has long since outlived its function as the indispensable central artery of the United States. The Nile, Ganges and Yangtze-Kiang are great rivers, but they have long since been tamed, dammed and domesticated to the uses of men and are no longer essential to communication and transportation. But the Amazon has been neither conquered nor rendered obsolete. No man can penetrate its domain except by following its waters; it is unsubdued and uncontrolled by any of the devices of men, but all men within its sphere of influence are dependent upon it for virtually every act and function of their lives. Certainly it was apparent to Herman and me, as we neared the end of our long journey, how constantly and completely dependent we had been upon it. We had drunk of it, bathed in it, traveled on it, taken our food from it, found our way by it, been protected from heat, insects and animals by it. Without it our crossing of the continent could not even have been contemplated—much less completed. Without it neither we nor any living thing we had encountered could have lived or moved. The Amazon had not been merely the river on which we traveled. It had been the world in which we lived.

The soft night wind ruffled the tassels of my hammock. It was the same east wind of Amazonia that had purred through the rigging of the *Huana Capac*, *Melita* and *Euyaba* throughout our entire crossing of the continent. The same, and yet—I suddenly realized—not the same. For now, faintly but unmistakably, it bore with it the clean, clear breath of the ocean. It was strangely

difficult to realize that our journey was almost over—that the great flowing highway which had borne us so long and so far was at last to reach its end and that the next morning we would be out of the ageless, changeless jungle world and back in the twentieth century of men and machines.

After a while I clambered from my hammock and walked forward to the bridge. No light was visible anywhere on the horizon; only the night with its stars, the dark, leaning palms along the distant shore and the heavy waters flowing. The *Cuyaba's* passengers had retired early, to be well rested for the great events of the morning, and the only illumination on the top-deck was the red and green navigation lights and a faint glow from the captain's cabin behind the bridge. He was listening, as he often did at night, to his radio. It was playing a thin, plaintive tune—a song of indolence, starshine and the scented tropics—and its sound passed softly along the deck where I stood and out into the night. It was the perfect accompaniment to the time and the place. Tomorrow, I thought, my eyes will again be surveying banks and bathrooms, factories and film palaces; my ears will be full of the sound of grinding gears and the voices of people trying to sell me something. But tonight I am still free. Tonight that world has not yet encompassed me and taken me back to itself, and all that exists between heaven and earth are the river and the palms and that thin music floating—

But no—something had happened to the music. It had faded, disappeared. Strangled, metallic rumblings came from the captain's cabin, and I knew he must be fingering the dials. The sound swelled and roared, crashed out in the angry dissonance of a tropical hurricane. Then, suddenly, sharply, clear and commanding as the voice of an archangel:

“—On Saturday afternoon the popular Boy Scout leader, Mr. Tinker Scrod, will speak here at Town Hall. The scoutmaster's talk is called, ‘Does the Altitude Bother the Growing Boy Playing Leapfrog?’ On Sunday—”

“Hello, Mr. Allen.”

“If it isn't Portland! Well, sir—they laughed at me when I

walked into the turkish bath with two dozen clams. They didn't know I was going to have a snack in the steam room."

Home is the sailor—

As I walked back to my hammock the voice faded, and soon it was gone. I lay for a while watching the river, the palms and the sky, and soon I was dropping off toward sleep. Faintly I heard the ship's gong sounding. Six bells—Bulova Watch Time.

## X

### HOW LIKE A GOD

THE *thing* had me by the throat. Beads of sweat stood out on my face and my breath came in short, labored gasps as sinuous green-striped coils tightened inexorably about my neck. The blood swelled and pounded in my temples. Was this, I wondered, to be the end? Had I journeyed three thousand miles across a jungle continent, had I escaped the menacing clutches of wild beasts, fevers and cockroaches, only to meet death thus ignominiously in a bedroom in Pará's Grande Hotel? Desperately I tugged at the green horror that was knotted against my windpipe; grimly I struggled against extinction—

The bathroom door opened and Herman emerged, complete with Barbasol and Corona Perfecto. He examined me critically.

"Your necktie's on crooked," he said.

It was a time of many wonders, that first night in Pará. One by one we rediscovered the marvels of modern civilization, which for two months we had not only renounced but almost forgotten. Not only were there neckties that throttled us; there were soft mattresses that yielded to weary posteriors, hot water taps from which hot water actually emerged, trousers with creases in the right places, linen that crinkled, razor-blades that cut, windows that opened, bells that rang. We devoted our first two hours in the Grande Hotel almost exclusively to ringing bells. That there were bells at all was exciting. That they rang was astonishing. But that they were answered stretched credulity to the breaking point. Valets, laundresses, bellhops and waiters formed an endless procession through the room. Perhaps half the things we asked for we actually wanted; the other half we

requested only for the strange, sweet satisfaction that they *could* be had.

The *Cuyaba*, the sights, sounds and smells of Amazonia, were far away. Pará lies directly upon the estuary of the great river, but in the neat indoor world of carpets, columns and shiny furniture in which we found ourselves it was remote and unreal. True enough, the untracked jungle stretched endlessly away on three sides of us, and on the fourth lay the barren wastes of the ocean; but within the tight bright confines of the city *genus homo* ruled the roost, and the pleasant illusion persisted that all nature had been designed only as a useful supplier of his needs and an artistic background for his activities. To eyes long accustomed to the dim glow of the stars the blatant mazdas of the Avenida Independencia were the lanterns of fairyland. To ears inured to a nightly chorus of howler monkeys the rumbling and screeching of the passing trams were sweet music from a well-remembered song.

Deliberately and self-consciously we savored each new thrill with which we were presented. After two hours of dressing and admiring ourselves in the pier-glass we left our room and descended to the main floor—in an elevator. We nodded to the desk clerk, and the desk clerk said, "Good evening, gentlemen." We passed through the reading room and saw the headlines of a New York newspaper that was only four days old. We said "sidecars" to the bartender, and the bartender knew what sidecars meant. We dined without benefit of beans, rice or chicken feathers. We wiped our hands and mouths on napkins. And later we strolled the principal streets and squares of the city, with lights overhead and paving underfoot. We stared at the unfamiliar phenomena of policemen, taxicabs, newsboys, billboards and painted ladies. We stepped gingerly across the gutters, lest we soil our immaculate shoes. We stopped off in every café we passed, lest we miss any aspect of the busy night-life about us. We discoursed softly and circumspectly to waiters and hackmen, lest we suddenly forget that we were now civilized, cosmopolitan gentlemen and give vent to a loud and unseemly *pasta fazool*.

I am rather afraid that we were two rather ridiculous and self-important *turista* as we rediscovered civilization on that first fabulous night in Pará. But we were also two well-scrubbed, well-dressed, well-fed, well-lubricated *turista*, and I am charitable enough to think that we were perhaps entitled to our aberrations.

"Not a Goddam tree in sight!" exulted Herman as we emerged from a bar. "Not a palm, not a mudbank, not a cockroach!"

We stood for a moment contemplating the beauty of the scene before us: stone walls, a cobbled street, lamp posts, trolley tracks, telephone poles, and in the distance the outline of a factory chimney. As we started off down the Rua San Antonio we burst into song. The bright lights of the Praça da Republica beckoned gaily ahead. God was in his heaven, and Marlene Dietrich was at the Ciné do Brasil.

After our first night of sartorial and gastronomical debauchery neither Herman nor I, I am afraid, were in quite the right mood to investigate or appreciate Pará. In the first place, of course, there were hang-overs. In the second place, there were *negociaciones* to be made. Neither of us had anticipated that our Amazonian adventure would consume a full two months, and it now behooved us to get about our respective businesses as quickly as possible: Herman to Rio and Buenos Aires on behalf of the button trade, and I to New York on behalf of my future solvency. By the Pan-American clipper ships, which departed bi-weekly from Pará, home was only three days away, and the prospect presented a strong temptation to throw discretion—and express checks—to the winds. But I resisted the urge, and by noon of our second day in Pará found myself in possession of a ticket for the Booth Line freighter *Clement*, which was to sail before the end of the week. Herman meanwhile bought passage on a southbound Brazilian coastal vessel, which would leave, *posiblemente*, two days after mine. Knowing the vagaries of South American transportation, however, he had already resigned himself to a fortnight or better in Pará.

Our transportation secured, our next activities were in the best *turista* tradition. I had traveled enough before to know that a returning voyager cannot warm the hearts of family and friends with tall tales alone, and although I had now been in South America for more than three months I had yet to buy a single gift. The grim work of rectifying this state of affairs began at nine in the morning and continued until well past nightfall, leaving me exhausted but triumphant. Not only was there a neat checkmark opposite every name on my list, but I had even acquired a small, floating surplus to cover the contingency of unexpected births and marriages. All that remained now was to compose the stories to accompany the gifts. It was not difficult.—The pocketbooks and wallets were from the hide of an alligator I had shot at dawn on an inlet of the River Napo. The cigarette boxes had been made from a giant ceiba tree in whose branches I had sought shelter from a tropical hurricane. The stuffed three-toed sloth I had strangled with my bare hands while hiding in the forest from the poisoned arrows of the Chuncho Indians.—And so on. I could check over the details on the voyage home; and I mustn't forget to remove the price-tags.

While I was big game hunting on the Rua San Antonio Herman repaired to the town's largest photographic establishment to supervise the developing of the photographs we had taken. Both of us had carried cameras on the journey, and I had felt rather proud of my conscientiousness in putting mine to frequent use; but in comparison with my companion's my total output was negligible. By the time we reached Pará the Man from Muscatine had accumulated enough exposed celluloid to supply the entire needs of *The Daily News*, *Life*, *Look*, *Pic* and the *National Geographic* for the next decade. As a result, his labors at the photographer's extended over some three days before he at last staggered into our hotel room with the complete fruits of our transcontinental clicking. I had a few uneasy moments as we pored through them. I can enjoy a fine photograph as well as the next man, but years of reluctant association with amateur camera fans have taught me to be wary, and I

dreaded that at any moment that lunatic Leica glint might come into Herman's eye and I would forthwith be subjected to a passionate discourse on angles, filters, composition and *chiaroscuro*. But by this time I should have known my companion better than that.

"Which ones do you like best?" I inquired timidly when we had gone through the lot.

"The ones I'm in," he replied promptly.

At last we got around to seeing Pará. (Or, if you prefer, Belém. Technically the latter is the correct name of the town, Pará being the state of which it is the capital and metropolis; but virtually no one except government officials and the Pan-American timetable refer to it as such.) By either of its names it was the first city of size or consequence we had seen since leaving Lima, and coming to it fresh from three thousand miles of jungle-rivers and thatched villages its attractions were of course magnified to our eyes. By any standard, however, it was an interesting and pleasing community. Known to the *turista* guidebooks as "the Paris of the Jungle," it does its humble best to live up to the extravagant comparison. No one would mistake the Grande Hotel for the Edouard VII, or the Praça da Republica for the Place de l'Opéra, but the imposing public buildings, clanging trams, broad, tree-shaded avenues and crowded sidewalk cafés make a brave showing for a city in a tropical swamp one degree removed from the equator.

In the three-hundred-odd years of its existence Pará has shared the ups and downs of the vast jungle region at the front door of which it stands. The key city of the rubber boom (it gave its name to the finest variety of rubber known) it grew, in the early years of this century, to a population of almost 250,000, and somehow, in spite of the subsequent economic collapse of Amazonia, it has succeeded in holding it. Its inhabitants today are probably as variegated racially as any city in the world outside of New York. The predominant white strain is Portuguese, but for centuries this has been mingled with other

strains, as men of all nations have come and gone, pressing up the great river in search of their diverse El Dorados. Negroes have been numerous since the earliest slave-trading days, and the aboriginal Tapuyas Indians, one of the strongest South American breeds, have survived the ravages of time and white domination in considerable numbers. With the fall of rubber Pará lost its position as one of the great seaports of the western world; the big liners—Munson and Furness—now give it a wide berth as they steam down to Rio and B.A.; but the city still hangs on. Its squares, boulevards and buildings are old, but still beautiful. Its harbor is still the bottle neck to three million square miles of unimaginably rich and unexploited country. Pará firmly believes the day will come when it will not only regain, but far surpass, its former commercial importance. And meanwhile the sun is warm, the nights are fragrant and golden with stars, and the bananas and mangos hang heavy from the trees.

Indeed, we soon discovered that the mangos are apt to hang *too* heavy from the trees. During the afternoon rains it was almost dry in the streets beneath the thickly intertwined branches, but the unwary passer-by, though safe from raindrops, was often subjected to a barrage of plopping mangos, loosened from their moorings by the storm. Aside from this habit of aerial bombardment, however, the trees of Pará were exemplary. The squares were a riot of multi-colored foliage, and the principal avenues were wide, green tunnels, cool even at midday beneath arching sunshields of leaves and blossoms. Except in the very center of town, where the hotels and shops were clustered, the surrounding jungle made its influence felt. At the end of every street was a green wall of vegetation. At every break in the pavement ferns, mosses and tiny flowers pressed themselves upward into the sunlight. There were times when one could almost feel the vast stirring of life beneath the slabs and cobbles of the city. There was fire in the earth beneath Pará: not the fire of molten rock, but of living, growing seed.

The official show places were few in number and easily disposed of in a morning's conscientious rubbernecking. Architec-

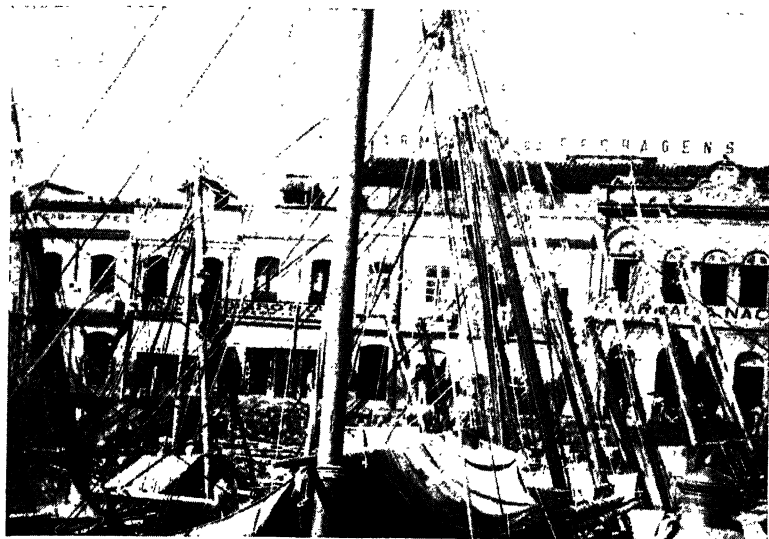
turally the town's pride is the Paz Theater, located in the central square, the Praça da Republica, directly opposite the Grande Hotel. Even larger, though less spectacular, than the Manáos opera house, it has in recent years suffered the same sad fate as its up-river counterpart and stands today more as a monument to former glory than as a useful public institution. Close beside it stands the Commercial Museum, cavernous and deserted, but containing exhaustive exhibits of the wild and manufactured products of Amazonia. The *praça* itself is as lovely a public square as can be found anywhere. Broad, tree-lined avenues debouch into it from all sides, and in its center is a green park in which palms, ferns and all manner of tropical vegetation flourish in luxuriant but carefully tended profusion. Through them the white shapes of the theater, museum and many monuments stand out in clear and symmetrical relief, like temples in an antique Grecian glade.

Churches, of course, abound in Pará, as in any Latin-American city, but the cathedral on the Praça Frei Caetano Brandão is the only one of particular interest. Built in 1710, it is an admirable example of Portuguese colonial architecture and contains most of the art treasures which the city has accumulated during its colorful, checkered history. The only building which outranks it in age is the nearby *Castello*, a venerable fortress overlooking the harbor, which the earliest settlers erected to insure their continued domination over the mouth of the Amazon. Brazilian soldiery still patrol its battlements, but presumably only for the exercise, as in its present state the entire structure could easily be demolished by a well-aimed squirt from a water-pistol.

Stretching eastward from the *Castello* along the broad curve of the water front is the most interesting and colorful section of the city. Boasting only one railroad line, with a total trackage of one hundred miles, Pará's commercial contact with both the outside world and interior Brazil is maintained exclusively by shipping, and its docks are the hub and mainspring of its life. Over them pass not only the materials which it itself produces or consumes, but literally every individual article that enters or

leaves the valley of the Amazon. Down from Iquitos, Manáos and the smaller river towns flows a steady stream of rubber, *balata*, nuts, fruits, timber, hides and fish, bound north to the United States, east to Europe, or south to the large cities of lower Brazil. And in the opposite direction pass the manufactured products of the civilized world; but in lesser quantity. For although Amazonia has great need for machines and machine-made goods it has little money with which to pay for them. In addition to its through traffic the harbor enjoys considerable local commerce of its own. For every ocean-going freighter alongside its docks there were a hundred little sailboats with gaily colored sails, darting about the roadstead or lying gunwale to gunwale along the wharves. The nearby open markets were filled with the cargos they had brought in: huge mounds of *castanhas*, the ubiquitous chestnut or Brazil nut; sacks of beans, cocoa and *farinha*; piles of drying fish; hides of alligators, frogs and snakes; jaguar pelts; monkeys and parrots, stuffed and alive; and painted gourds, armadillo shells and alleged poisoned arrows to attract the sporadic *turista* trade. The scene was alive, colorful and vivid—particularly to the nostrils. The fact that there were at least ten vendors to every purchaser seemed to make no difference to anyone, and the water-front merchants, lazily calling out their wares or dozing in the shade of their sheds, seemed to be having a good time, if not a particularly profitable one.

Our other expeditions about Pará brought us to the zoo, the Goeldi Museum (zoological and botanical) and the Bosque, a park near the city's outskirts in which virgin jungle, goldfish ponds, free-wandering tapirs and lemonade-stands are bewilderingly scrambled together. By this stage of our journey, however, we were quite willing to leave the Amazonian flora and fauna to their own devices, and we spent our last few days in town chiefly in the company of the gringo crowd which frequented the Grande Hotel café. After two months of jungle sights and sounds a traveling salesman with a clean collar was a visitor from Olympus and a "pleased to meetcha" in purest New Yorkese fell on our ears with the richness of a symphony.



PARÁ ALSO BOASTS A SEAGOING JUNGLE



A TUNNEL OF MANGO TREES ON THE PRACA DA REPUBLICA

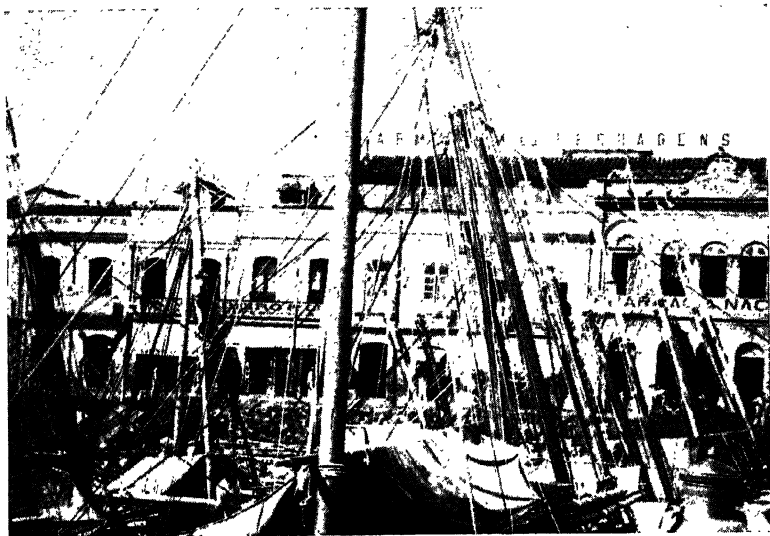


*Nortamericanos* and *Inglesas* were anything but numerous in Pará. Unlike the west coast, where the wealth of the Andes offers tempting inducement to large-scale exploitation, down-at-heel Amazonia at the present time possesses little that is of interest to foreign capital, and with the exceptions of Fordlandia, the Booth Line and Pan-American Airways there is not an enterprise within a two-thousand mile radius that could properly be called Big Business. We soon discovered that it required only an hour at the small tables of the Grande's café to meet every gringo in town. There were more Englishmen than Americans, most of them clerks in the local Booth office or officers from the *Clement*, on which I was—when it got good and ready—to sail. Parsons, our steadfast mentor from Iquitos onward, scarcely had time to present us to his colleagues and seal the introductions with a festive gin-and-ginger before boarding an outbound Liverpool freighter, with the disconsolate Bouchers trailing in his wake; but by that time—after a full twenty-four hours in town—we were, by expatriate-gringo standards, old-timers in the community and practically blood-brothers to every paleface in Pará.

Though commercially ignored, the lower Amazon has for years been a mecca for American scientists. Much of the best work of the Rockefeller Foundation has been done along the thousand-mile stretch of river between Pará and Manáos, and each new year brings with it two or three expeditions from other institutions bent on botanical or zoological research. The group currently in Pará was concerned with the investigation of the nature and habits of electric eels, on behalf of the American Museum of Natural History. They were a pleasant and interesting group of men, but it was obvious from the moment we met them that they were not going to let us out of their clutches until we accompanied them to their laboratory in the Goeldi Museum and permitted ourselves to be convinced that their pets really had what it took. We consented to five shocks apiece in the interests of science, but drew the line at becoming involved with the largest eel in the collection—an ugly black fellow more than three feet in length who looked capable of

leaves the valley of the Amazon. Down from Iquitos, Manáos and the smaller river towns flows a steady stream of rubber, *balata*, nuts, fruits, timber, hides and fish, bound north to the United States, east to Europe, or south to the large cities of lower Brazil. And in the opposite direction pass the manufactured products of the civilized world; but in lesser quantity. For although Amazonia has great need for machines and machine-made goods it has little money with which to pay for them. In addition to its through traffic the harbor enjoys considerable local commerce of its own. For every ocean-going freighter alongside its docks there were a hundred little sailboats with gaily colored sails, darting about the roadstead or lying gunwale to gunwale along the wharves. The nearby open markets were filled with the cargos they had brought in: huge mounds of *castanhas*, the ubiquitous chestnut or Brazil nut; sacks of beans, cocoa and *farinha*; piles of drying fish; hides of alligators, frogs and snakes; jaguar pelts; monkeys and parrots, stuffed and alive; and painted gourds, armadillo shells and alleged poisoned arrows to attract the sporadic *turista* trade. The scene was alive, colorful and vivid—particularly to the nostrils. The fact that there were at least ten vendors to every purchaser seemed to make no difference to anyone, and the water-front merchants, lazily calling out their wares or dozing in the shade of their sheds, seemed to be having a good time, if not a particularly profitable one.

Our other expeditions about Pará brought us to the zoo, the Goeldi Museum (zoological and botanical) and the Bosque, a park near the city's outskirts in which virgin jungle, goldfish ponds, free-wandering tapirs and lemonade-stands are bewilderingly scrambled together. By this stage of our journey, however, we were quite willing to leave the Amazonian flora and fauna to their own devices, and we spent our last few days in town chiefly in the company of the gringo crowd which frequented the Grande Hotel café. After two months of jungle sights and sounds a traveling salesman with a clean collar was a visitor from Olympus and a "pleased to meetcha" in purest New Yorkese fell on our ears with the richness of a symphony.



PARÁ ALSO BOASTS A SEAGOING JUNGLE



A TUNNEL OF MANGO TREES ON THE PRAÇA DA REPUBLICA

supplying enough "juice" to operate the New York subway system. The next day, we learned, one of the helpers in the laboratory inadvertently touched him while cleaning out his tank and came to half an hour later.

The other members of our round-table society were men of diverse interests. One was the American vice-consul; another was in the tropical fish business; another was an official of International Rotary, who was circling South America to promote goodwill and whatever else Rotary promotes. And on two occasions we were joined by Pan-Air pilots, in town overnight between hops on the long flight between Miami and Buenos Aires. As their schedules required them to take off in the early morning they confined their drinking to ginger ale and *guarana*, alternately feeling morose and noble in their abstinence. To refrain from liquor back home may mean one of many things: economy, a rebellious liver, moral scruples, or simply not wanting a drink. But in South America it can mean only one of two things: you're a pilot or you're a missionary.

Two topics of conversation, we soon discovered, held undisputed pre-eminence in Pará's café society: yellow fever and Lampion. The vast swamps that surround the mouth of the Amazon are an earthly paradise for mosquitoes, and from the earliest days of its history the city has been subjected to recurrent waves of attack from the dread Yellow Jack. During the past twenty years, since the first energetic campaigns of the Rockefeller Foundation and other public health agencies, there have been no severe epidemics. Occasional cases of the fever are, however, still reported, especially in the nearby river towns and villages, and in spite of all the efforts of the Brazilian government and foreign medical missions, Pará and its vicinity remain the only region in the entire western hemisphere in which the danger of widespread infection still remains. Uncomfortably aware of this, the inhabitants have developed a tendency to look for the worst; the mildest and most common tropical fevers are rigidly investigated by the city authorities, and even the most

unhypochoondriac of gringos is apt to develop in short order into a chronic temperature-taker and pulse-feeler.

Lampion, Topic Number Two on the café agenda, was not strictly speaking a disease, but incontrovertibly he belonged in the general category of tropical scourges. A brigand and bad man par excellence, he enjoyed in northern Brazil at the time of our visit a position of pre-eminence such as, in their day, Villa held in Mexico and Capone in Chicago. The exploits, famous and infamous, that were credited to him were legion, and rare indeed was the story told over the gin-and-gingers, whether its subject was international trade, the weather or Yale's football prospects, that did not culminate in a Lampion anecdote. Many of the yarns were obviously apocryphal: Lampion was a former sailor in the United States Navy; Lampion was a scion of the deposed royal house of Portugal and was trying to re-establish an empire in Brazil; Lampion was secretly building a fleet of warships to attack Rio de Janeiro; and so on—with embellishments a dime a dozen. At least one, however, had elements of plausibility, and even if not true is amusing enough to be repeated. It seems that some two or three years back, while engaged in his favorite pastime of looting a village near Pará, the great man was careless enough to allow himself to be shot in the leg. Having no medical man in his own entourage he adopted the simple expedient of kidnapping the local doctor, whom he carried off to his camp in the jungle and forced to stay in attendance until the wound had healed. This took about two weeks, and at the end of that time he told the doctor he might pack himself off to his home. The latter, overjoyed, was about to depart when Lampion stopped him.

"Can you play the piano?" he asked.

Unfortunately for himself, the doctor was a man of diverse accomplishments. Bewildered but unsuspecting, he confessed that he could.

"Can you play 'Onward, Christian Soldiers'?"

He could.

"Play it," ordered the bandit, pointing at a small instrument that stood in a corner of his tent.

The doctor did as he was told. When he had finished Lampion smiled and clapped him on the shoulder.

"You will not be going home after all," he said.

In amazement and despair the doctor asked why.

"For three years," his captor explained, "I have been carting that piano with me on my travels. All my life I have loved 'Onward, Christian Soldiers,' but neither I nor any of my men know how to play it. Now I have found someone who does. You will remain with me as my personal musician and play 'Onward, Christian Soldiers' for me while I am eating and before I go to bed."

The rest of the story is shrouded in darkness. But Lampion still roams the jungles, and the doctor hasn't yet come home.

The *Clement* was to sail at nine in the evening. The day and hour of departure had been known to me for some time, but now that it was actually at hand I had difficulty in believing it. Although in the weeks just past I had crossed a continent and encountered many varying kinds of scenes and men, all that I had seen and experienced was now, as I looked back, bound together on a single thread of vivid memory. The dust-dry ruins of Cajamarquilla and Pachacamac, the gray desolation of the high Andean passes, the damp green tunnel of the Pichis Trail, the mud-yellow, endless gyrations of Pachitea, Ucayali and Amazon; Jerry Blanchard and Casa Grace, Ted Waters and his bridge, Enrico Sims and his imagination, Baldwin-Lopez and his "Hula!", David Ball and his Old Toms, Sam Harris and his amontillado from Manchester, the Ph.D.'s and their electric eels: all these things and people were still close to me and very real. All of them, however various and unlike in themselves, were part of a single pattern; they were all actors and scenes in the same play; and through my recollection of them, like faint music changing but unchanged, flowed the deep, smooth rhythm of unbroken time. But now at last, I knew, time was to be broken.

In a week, a day, even in a few short hours, they would no longer be close to me or very real. They would dwindle and fade in my mind, just as the tall, leaning palms of the tropical coast would fade from my sight as the *Clement* stood out to sea. Soon I would have to struggle to recall them, or would forget them altogether: the crimson achiote paint beneath the Chunchos' sullen eyes; the taste of a cheese sandwich on a hill behind Chosica; the great, golden shield of the moon transforming the mosquito-hell of the River Napo into magic fairyland; Daniel Boone Rover Merriwell-Quixote in full panoply of "kelly," ferns and lance astride his patient Wally; and the yellow flood of the Amazon flowing, flowing. . . . The wind would come up from the northeast, the sea would turn from blue to green, the very air would carry with it a presentiment of the sights and sounds of home. South America would be gone. The jungle, the mountains and the rivers would be gone, and with them all the men and things they held. And, most of all, a way of living would be gone. Thought and will, book and picture, memory and desire—all the powers and devices man commands—would never get them back.

The vice-consul had asked us to dine with him, but we had declined. I snapped the lock of my duffelbag, patted my pockets to assure myself of the presence of passport and steamship tickets, and followed the bellhop downstairs.

"I'll order dinner while you're settling," said Herman. "What do you want?"

"Well, champagne's in order, I guess."

"Okay. What else?"

"Er—turtle soup—"

"And—?"

"Steak, French-frieds, salad, cheese, coffee."

"That all?"

"Sounds like plenty to me."

"Sure you haven't forgotten something?"

"Uh-huh."

"Sure?"

I looked at him closely and saw that his glance bore a gentle reproof. For a moment I was puzzled; but then the great light dawned, and together we shouted:

"Beans!"

"*Como no?*" applauded Herman.

We not only had them, but—so strangely inconstant an animal is man—actually enjoyed them. Our old enemies looked strange amid unaccustomed surroundings of snowy napery, burnished pewter and tall glasses, and there must surely have been complications, both dietetic and social, when they found themselves in the same gullets with Pommery & Greno, 1925; but our farewell dinner would not have been complete without them. His fond memories stirred, Herman inquired of the waiter if he might have a small order of chicken-feathers as garnishing, but the request elicited only a stunned silence.

"Oh, well," he sighed, "you can't have everything."

The meal over, I dispatched my luggage to the dock in a cab, and together we started out afoot. Our route to the *Clement* took us first through the glittering, noisy, café-lined squares and avenues of the town's center, then past long lines of closed and shuttered shops, and finally into the heavy, squalid darkness of the slums that line the water front. The night was quiet and very clear. The only sound we could hear was the scuffing of our own shoes against the uneven cobbles of the street.

"Sorry to be leaving?" asked Herman after a while.

"I'll be glad to see Ruth again."

"I asked if you're sorry you're leaving."

"You're damn right I am," I said.

We were silent for a block. I could tell from my companion's expression that he was brooding—or, at least, making as close an approach to brooding as the Merriwell-Quixote disposition would permit.

"You know, Jim," he said at last, "it's quite a place, this South America. Big as hell, full of things, untouched. Sort of like—er—well, like a virgin, waiting for you-know-what. You and me,

we've come a long way now, haven't we? But we've hardly seen anything—hardly scratched the surface."

"You'll be seeing plenty more of it," I replied. "Rio, Buenos Aires, the pampas—all of that. There'll be new people, new things."

"Yeah—people and things. The whole damn' world's chock-full of people and things. Only they're no good unless—" He fumbled and stopped.

"Unless what?" I asked.

"Unless you got a feeling about them. Know what I mean? Unless all the faces and voices and cities and rivers and mountains you see aren't just that only, but— Aw, the hell with it!"

We walked a little farther. From down the street came suddenly a faint breeze, blown up from the river. Herman paused to light a cigar and refrained from further conversation until it was drawing to his satisfaction. Then suddenly he resumed:

"The thing that's got me down is that the longer I mooch around down here the less I know about it. At least the less I think I know about it. At the beginning everything looked sort of simple. You know—there were gringos you had a drink with and spiks you gave orders to. There were hotels that were okay and hotels that were punk. There were some things you did to make money and other things you did to have a good time. But it isn't like that now. I guess there're still plenty of gringos and spiks and hotels in South America all right, and plenty of ways to make money and have a good time, but all that isn't what South America *is*, Jim—hell no! It's—well, for one thing, it's *full* of everything, all balled up together. It's big and rich and new and powerful and beautiful, and it's poor and ignorant and ugly and starving and lousy. It's like—"

"Like that," I said, pointing.

Ahead of us the street opened out into the broad plaza of the water front. There was only a thin crescent moon, but in its faint light we could see the dreary expanse of cobblestones and rutted mud that lay between us and the docks. High in the background loomed the *Clement*, her black hull hard against the

soft blackness of the night behind. A dark gush of smoke poured from her funnel, and small, yellow lights winked on her decks. Nearer us more yellow lights winked along the wharf, and among them moved a shadowy confusion of men, bales, crates and creaking machinery. And still nearer, slim and sudden in the center of the deserted plaza, was a solitary palm tree. There was a crumbled railing around it and a few mangy shrubs that might once have passed for a small park, but the effect was of the palm's springing full-bodied and alone from its bed of cobbles and rutted mud. It was a tall tree. Its great bole tapered slantingly across the hard blackness of the *Clement's* hull and its green head nodded against the soft blackness of smoke and sky. At its foot lay a man. His head was pillowed on a cobblestone, and a battered wreck of a guitar lay across his belly. His clothes were verminous rags; his hair was stiff with filth; his face was that of an exhumed corpse, to which the earth of the grave still clung. But with his hands he picked indolently at the strings of the guitar, and from his lips there came a slow, sad song. His eyes were open, staring upward, seeming to follow his music as it ascended, up the long smooth bole of the tree, through the green summit clump and out into the soft night. He was oblivious of us as we passed, and he was oblivious of the shrunk, louse-eaten dog that suddenly sidled up, sniffed tentatively at his extended bare feet and began to lick them.

"Yes," said Herman. "South America's like that."

Our farewells were brief.

"So long, Jim," he said.

"So long, Merriwell-Quixote." It was the first time I had ever used the name to his face.

"How's that?" he inquired.

"I said, it's been fun."

"You're damn tootin' it has." As he was about to turn away the old gleam leapt suddenly into his eye. "Say, I've been meaning to ask you something for a hell of a time. Ever hear of the Mackenzie River?"

"In Canada?"

"Yeah. It runs from near Edmonton clear up through the Northwest Territory to the Arctic Ocean. I was thinking maybe next summer or summer after we could—"

"Get off this boat," I ordered, "before I throw you off."

"Okay," he said soothingly and began descending the gangway. But halfway down he turned. "Better make it summer after next. The missus might get sore if it was this summer. Yep—that's it. Summer after next the Mackenzie. It's a date."

"Go to hell!"

He descended a few more steps, then turned once more.

"I understand there are *very* interesting shells in the Mackenzie," he declared with dignity.

Then he was gone. Soon the wharves were gone too, and the flickering lights, and the tall, proud palm, beneath which sat a creature who once was a man, making soft, sad music in the soft, sad tropic night.

Kipling would have been proud of the *Clement*. Not a large ship, she was sound, solid and respectable from keel to crow's-nest, and the broad, deep furrow which she cut in the southern ocean bore the unmistakable, authoritative imprint of empire. She was as English as Westminster Abbey. Although her appointed rounds took her to the far places of the tropics and her broad black hull had rubbed shoulders with all manner of strange craft and wharves, nothing whatever of the faraway or the exotic clung to her or intruded upon her immemorial, staid routine. The variegated cargo of hides, nuts, rubber and timber which she had received from the *Cuyaba* and other river boats was relegated to the decent obscurity of her hold. The garish colors of Amazonia had been supplanted by black and white iron stanchions, its cacophony of shouts and songs by the rhythm of clipped orders and the prim striking of the ship's bell, its weird and mighty conglomeration of smells by the unvarying, unrelieved aroma of fresh paint. As we crossed the equator and set our course north by west along the wild Guiana coast we might,

for all we aboard could tell, have been plowing the Irish Sea on a hot summer day, en route from Cardiff to Liverpool with a cargo of doorknobs.

The *Clement*, though primarily a freighter, had hearkened to the siren song of the *turista* trade and provided accommodations for some dozen passengers. On her current voyage, which took her from New York to Bahia and back, she carried her full complement, and whatever she herself lacked in color or dramatic values was more than made up for by her paying inmates. I soon discovered that I was the only passenger to board ship at Pará; indeed, I was the only one who was not in the process of making the whole round-trip. All the others had left New York together two months before and had been constantly in one another's company ever since. The result was that by the time of my late arrival they had reached a point of almost frenzied animosity and intrigue. Most of them were elderly people, some single, some in couples, who had selected a cruise on the *Clement* as a pleasant and inexpensive way of eluding the rigors of the northern winter, but by this stage of the game there was not one among them who would not wholeheartedly have cast his vote for frostbite and chilblains as the lesser of two evils. In two months they had become so thoroughly sick of the sight of one another's faces and the sound of one another's voices that they would, I am sure, have gladly resorted to violence and bloodshed if they had possessed the necessary implements. Fortunately, however, the only weapon on board was the captain's revolver, and the captain, he himself explained to me, was keeping that to commit suicide.

Caught between the withering crossfire of this grim warfare, my first few days on the *Clement* were, to say the least, bewildering. The elderly gentleman who sat at my right in the dining saloon spoke neither to the elderly gentleman at my left nor to the elderly couple across the table. The elderly couple, in turn, refused even to pass the butter to the young red-headed woman who was their neighbor, and the young red-headed woman despised everyone so thoroughly that she read novels throughout the meals and never addressed so much as a word to anyone save

the steward. Before we were well out of sight of Pará the contagion had spread even to the officers. Encountering the ship's doctor on deck the first morning out I inquired if he would care to make up a foursome at shuffleboard with the captain, one of the lady passengers and myself.

"I can't," he replied sadly. "The captain doesn't speak to me."

I soon discovered that it required more than an innocent heart and a friendly smile to keep from being embroiled in internecine warfare myself. When I fraternized with one group I immediately and automatically became *de trop* with another, and when I subsequently wormed my way back into the good graces of the second clan I was excommunicated as a traitor and scab by the first. Before the voyage was one-third over I was so weary of listening to half the passengers tell me what was wrong with the other half that I wished a plague on all their houses and, following the lead of the red-headed lady, carried a book constantly with me in which I might bury my nose when the barrages began.

The *Clement* sailed from Pará on the twenty-second of March and was due in New York on April second. Ten days, to be sure, were an inconsiderable period of time in terms of the total duration of my wanderings, but in terms of my impatience to get home—once I had left South America behind me—they were a fair imitation of eternity. Shuffleboard, detective novels and even the finest of kidney stews and suet puddings could not but be faintly anticlimactic after three months of Andes and Amazon, and the thrill of informing the lady passengers that I was really Noel Coward disguised as Richard Halliburton wore off all too quickly. The propellers churned and the funnel belched smoke, but the pin on the smoking-room chart crept northward with maddening leisureliness, and the latitude lines seemed to back away before it. I wished wholeheartedly that I had thrown my pinchpenny conscientiousness to the winds and returned home by plane. Getting Back to It All is a performance that should be accomplished as quickly and painlessly as possible.

There was little or nothing to distinguish the passing of the days. The *Clement's* course lay well to the east of the outermost

West Indies, and at no time did we pass within sight of land. On the fifth day six warships of the British Navy's West Indian Squadron came up over our stern and passed us as quickly as if we were going backward. On the sixth—Easter Sunday—the captain read Mass, and we had tutti-frutti ice cream for dinner. On the seventh we crossed the Tropic of Cancer. In between these great events there were sporadic deck games and poker in the bar. And that was all. By this time most of us were behaving as if everyone else on the ship were invisible.

It was not something that *happened*, but something that all in a moment, instantly and completely, *was*. The stars had been close and glowing; now they were infinitely remote. The wind had poured, liquid-smooth, out of the night across the *Clement's* deck; now it was whistling, gusty and askew, through the rigging of the swaying masts. We had been in the tropics; now we had reached the north. The change in the world about us—or at least our awareness of it—could scarcely have been more sudden if we had been bodily projected from Pará to New York in the twinkling of an eye.

I circled the deck with my hands in my pockets. . . . It was cold. It was genuinely, incredibly, beautifully cold. I had almost forgotten what cold was like: a tingling in the body, a stir of blood in the cheeks, a clearness in the eyes. And a clearness in the air, too; and in the sea and sky. Even the clouds were clear—clean-cut and sharp—creeping slowly like a glacier through blue-black space. As I rounded the afterdeck I could see the foaming avenue of the wake trailing endlessly southward. At the end of it, perhaps, there was still South America. At the end of it, perhaps, there were still nodding palms, dark jungle trails and alligators dozing in yellow rivers. But they were gone now—gone and irrevocably lost on the wings of the keen, cold wind that beat down upon us from the north. And in their place—vivid and compelling as if I had never left them—were the responsibilities of home. In three days this fine, fancy escape of mine would

have come full circle. In three days I would be back precisely where I started, with four sets of scenery in Cain's Warehouse, the curse of the critics upon my head, and those old enemies, The Facts of Life, staring me balefully in the face.

I drew a deep breath and for the first time in nearly four months I stared back at them.

Whatever it is I've got out of this trip it's not headlines in the papers or money in the bank. Nor, I'm afraid, is it any notable aggrandizement of my physical or mental resources. I was healthy enough when I set out, and I'm neither more nor less so now (unless, of course, the little malarial fellows are still lurking in my corpuscles, in which case I'm less). I knew a little about the politics and economics of South America before I went there, and now that I'm back I must confess that I know very little more. When my good friends who read the *Herald Tribune* ask me about the outlook for Peruvian copper, I shall be busy blowing my nose; and when my equally good friends who read *The Daily Worker* inquire about the exploitation of peon labor on the haciendas, I shall answer that I think the Yankees will again win the pennant. Whatever else it may have accomplished my journey has not made me into an expert or authority on anything.

And the Gilded Man? The elusive one, alas, remains just where he was before the grim-visaged gentry who go down to their seats on passes sent me scuttling to the ends of the earth in search of him; just where he was before Sir Walter Raleigh came, and Pinzon and Crellana and Pizarro and all the rest; just where he will be when the last restless, dream-drunk wanderer of the human race has come and gone and been forgotten. The bite of wanderlust and a book of express checks are not the passport to the fabulous land of El Dorado. The soul's peace and the heart's desire are no more to be found in the remote green wilderness of an equatorial jungle than in the booking office of Mr. Lee Shubert's Select Theaters Corporation. For a short while I have made my escape from many unpleasant realities, but I am unmistakably still the same fellow I was in the dark days before Chosica and the *Ferrocarril Central* and Pichis mud and the clamless

Napo and Daniel Boone Rover Merriwell-Quixote swam pleasantly into my ken. By any addition, the sum total of my accomplishment and profit is a neat round zero.

And yet—come hell, high water and a fate worse than "Stork Mad"—I know that this escape of mine was good.

It was good, I think, precisely for the reason that it had no purpose, no profit and no result. It was good, not in spite of, but *because* of the fact that its end was neither the discovery of a mine nor the building of a bridge nor the investigation of economic conditions nor a better knowledge of the mating habits of three-toed sloths. It was good because it was taken, purely and simply, for its own sake.

George Leigh Mallory, who in addition to being the greatest of Himalayan climbers was also a great man, was once asked why he desired so desperately to climb Mount Everest. His answer consisted of three words:

"Because it's there."

I like to believe that is why I went to the Andes and the Amazon. Because they are there. And although, like the celebrated bear who went over the mountain before me, I saw only the other side, I am content. For I had a hell of a good time seeing it.

The storm picked us up some two hundred miles off Bermuda and carried us well past Hatteras. For two days the *Clement* staggered and wallowed; crew, passengers and furniture pitched to and fro in her groaning innards; and past and future were equally forgotten in the grim but losing battle to retain one's lunch. But on the third morning it was gone, and miraculously in its place, far and faint across our port bow, were the long white beaches of New Jersey.

It was the first day of April. The wind blew lightly from the land, and the sun was slanting upward across the pale, rain-washed sky. It was not the sun of the Andes nor the sun of the Amazon. It carried no bright, flaming fulfillment, but only gentle

promise. It sparkled with light dancer's toes upon the *Clement's* plodding hulk, and not so many miles away, I knew, it was sparkling upon the first shy hyacinths in suburban gardens, and upon green turf where white balls were flying, and upon the new spring hats of lovely women as they emerged from the shops of Fifth Avenue.

All day we followed the beaches. The long ribbon of sand unrolled out of blue distance, and with it came piers and boardwalks and the frame and stucco façades of homes and hotels along the shore. At four in the afternoon we rounded Sandy Hook. To the north and west of it the sea seemed to open out again into illimitable space, but I knew this was merely an illusion. Any moment now, out of the very floor of ocean, out of the thin veil of haze that clung to its surface, would arise—home. Small, scurrying tugs and fishing boats crowded up at us over the horizon. The clang of heaving buoys sounded louder across the water. Suddenly from right and left the green shoulders of Bay Ridge and Staten Island closed in upon us, and we were in the hurrying, ship-jammed confusion of the inner bay. And now, at last, up they came—the topless towers of the gigantic, beautiful city. My eyes drank in the incredible reality, as they had every time before when I had come to New York through its harbor and as they always would no matter how often I should come again. How like a god was man, who could build himself such a habitation out of the jungle of the world!

And how like a jungle was his work when it was done.

The *Clement* began swinging around toward its pier. I went below to my cabin and completed my packing. All must be neat and in order so that the customs inspector could enjoy himself tearing things apart. When I reappeared on deck the gangway was going down. At the opposite end was a small huddle of people, but I saw just one. A new spring hat, by God! A new spring hat and two outstretched arms.

It may not have been the Gilded Man, but it was a damned good substitute.

Q.E.D.

*The New York Times*  
April 27, 1937

James R. Ullman, recently returned from South America, announces the purchase of a new play by —





